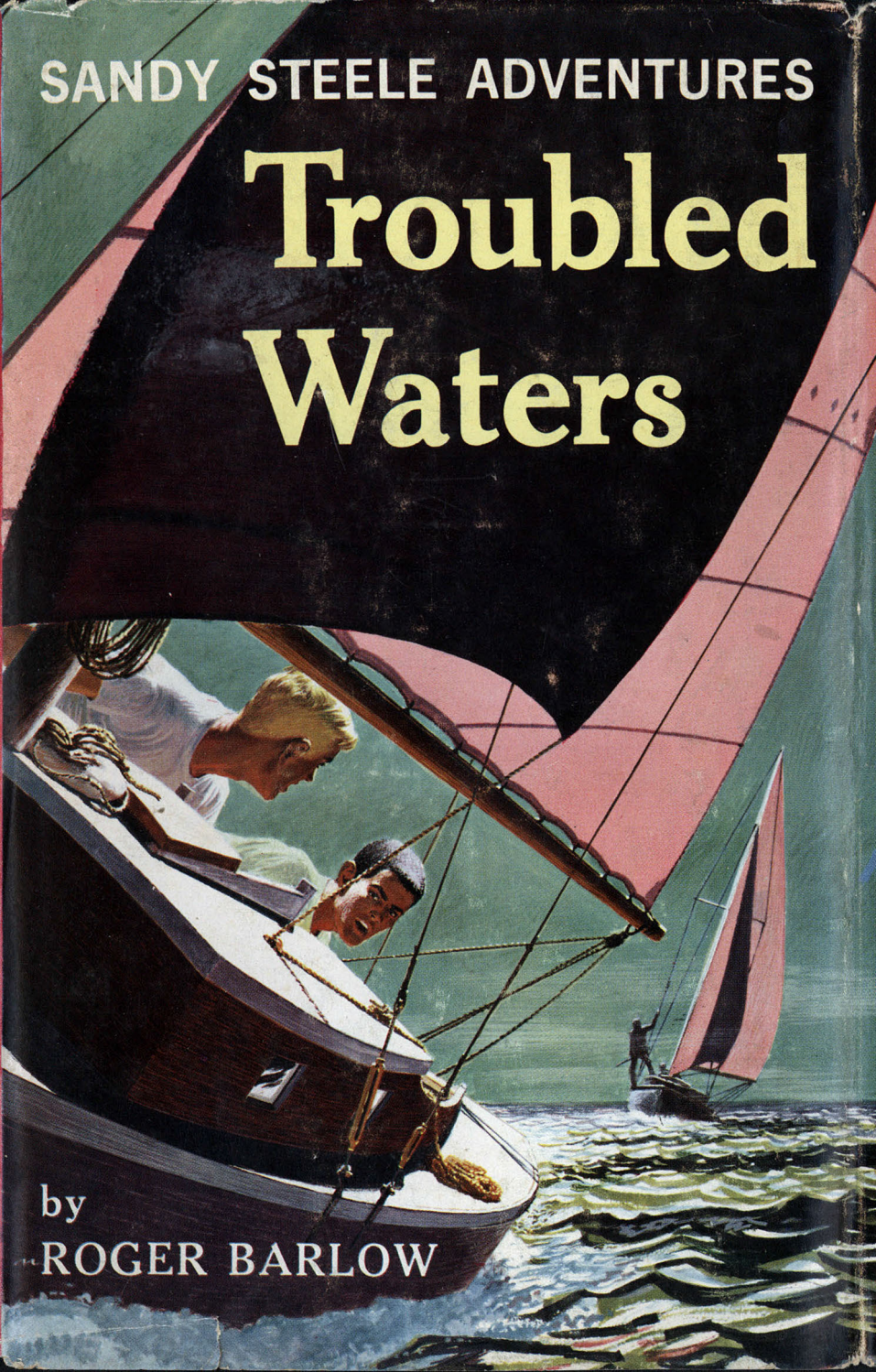
SANDY STEELE ADVENTURES

Troubled Waters



by ROGER BARLOW

"Look before you leap" is excellent advice, but Sandy and Jerry didn't follow it. They assumed that the trim little sloop in the cove was Sandy's boat that had drifted away in the storm, and they gaily sailed off in it. Unfortunately, though it looked enough like Sandy's new sloop to be its twin, it belonged to some very unsavory characters.

When Sandy and Jerry discovered their mistake, it was too late to return the boat with an apology. They were in trouble —real trouble.

Their efforts to outmaneuver their pursuers, together with the sailing lore, add up to a fascinating book.

$1.00

SANDY STEELE
ADVENTURES
by Roger Barlow

If this is the first Sandy Steele Adventure you have read, you will undoubtedly want to know more about Sandy and his friends. The back of the jacket lists other titles in the series. Choose any one of them and be sure of entertaining reading.

Whether Sandy is at home in Valley View, California, or traveling about the country, he meets interesting people and finds exciting things to do. Join him on his adventures and have fun!

Jacket painting by Paul Nonnast

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6. TROUBLED WATERS

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Troubled Waters

ROGER BARLOW

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Troubled Waters

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ROGER BARLOW

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SANDY STEELE Adventures

6

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SANDY STEELE ADVENTURES

Black Treasure

Danger at Mormon Crossing

Stormy Voyage

Fire at Red Lake

Secret Mission to Alaska

Troubled Waters

Sandy Steele Adventures

TROUBLED WATERS

BY ROGER BARLOW

SIMON AND SCHUSTER
New York, 1959

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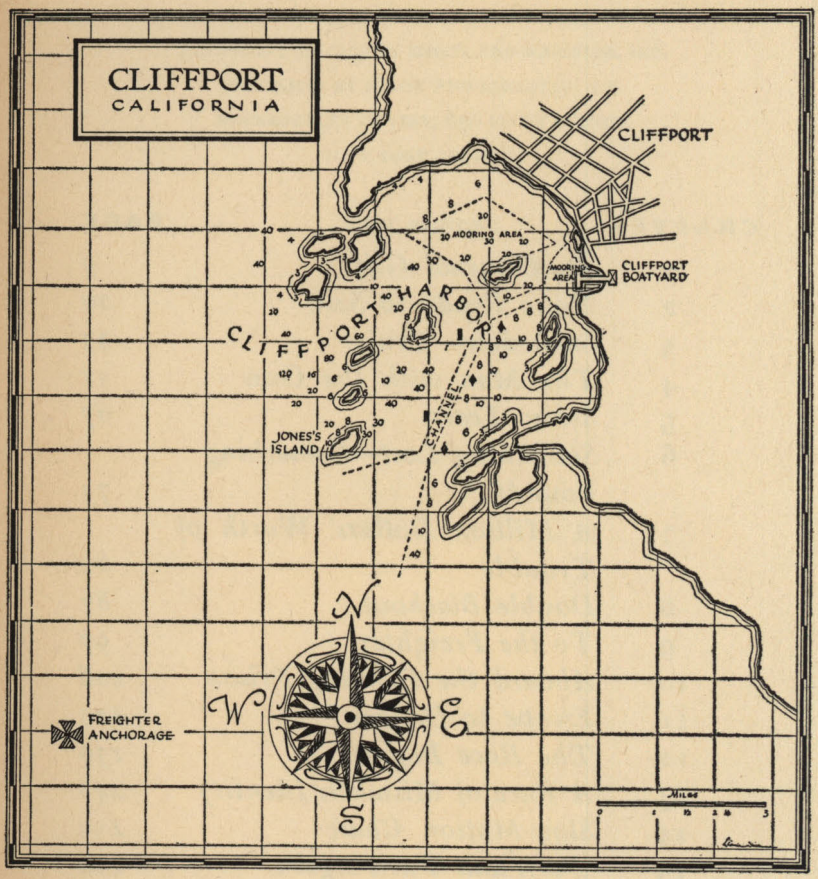
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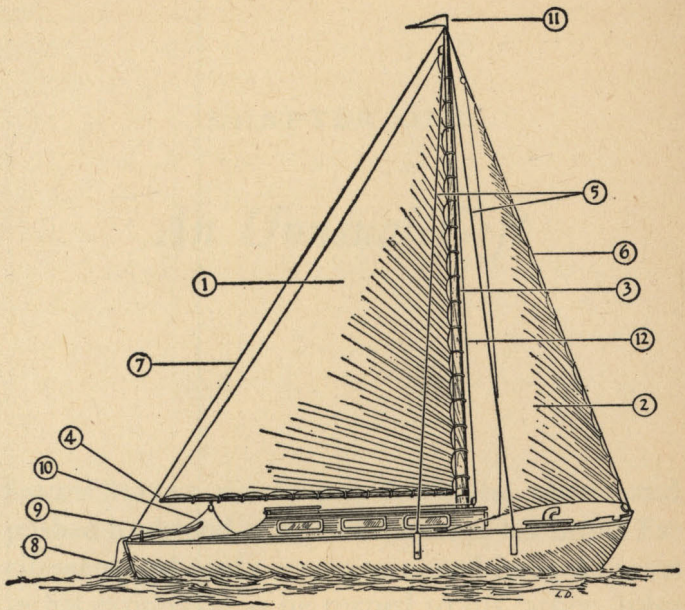

SLOOP

① Mainsail
② Jib
③ Mast
④ Boom
⑤ Shrouds (standing rigging)
⑥ Headstay (" ")
⑦ Backstay (" ")
⑧ Rudder
⑨ Tiller
⑩ Mainsheet
⑪ Hawk
⑫ Halyards

CHAPTER ONE

An Unusual Gift

SANDY STEELE slowly put down the phone and pushed his blond cowlick back from his brow. Excitement and confusion were mixed in equal parts in his expression as he turned to his father, John Steele, who stood leaning against his workbench, idly tossing a piece of quartz crystal in the air.

"Wow!" Sandy said. "Leave it to Uncle Russ to come up with a real surprise!"

"It certainly seems to be a habit of his," John Steele smiled. "What do you think of this particular surprise?"

"I hardly know what to think," Sandy answered. "The question is, what do you and Mother think?

I mean, is it all right if I go—if I can find somebody to go with me?"

"Your mother and I discussed this with your Uncle Russ before he called you," Sandy's father said, "so I guess that's one worry you don't have to consider. The only problem you have is finding somebody who knows how to handle a boat, and who'll be interested in making this trip with you."

Wrinkling his forehead in thought, Sandy swung his gangling six-foot frame up on to the workbench next to his father. "How about you, Dad?" he asked. "Do you know anything about sailing a boat?"

His father shook his head. "Sailing is hardly a skill that a government field geologist needs to develop. My work is with rocks and minerals—the dryest kind of dry land. What I know about water, you could carve on granite and put in your watch pocket!"

"Geology didn't make you into an inventor, a chemist, an electrical engineer, a carpenter and gosh knows what else," Sandy answered, waving around him at the crowded workshop with its confusing mass of equipment. "I just thought you might have done some reading on this subject, too."

John Steele smiled. "As the proud but confused

owner of a new sailboat, one of the first things you'll learn is that there's a world of difference between theory and practice. I've been out on a boat a few times; years ago, though. I've also read some books on the subject, as you thought. But all I know is that I don't know anything." He put down the quartz crystal and moved away from the workbench. "No," he said, "if you're going to be able to accept your Uncle Russ's offer of a sailboat as a gift, and if you're going to sail it on a three-day trip down from Cliffport, you'll have to find someone with practical knowledge to help you do it."

Sandy frowned in concentration. "Finding a sailor in Valley View is going to be like finding a ski instructor in the Sahara Desert!" he said. "Why, this town is almost one hundred miles inland from the ocean!"

"That's true," John Steele said; "but it seems to me that I once heard you and one of your friends talking about sailing. If I'm not mistaken, it was Jerry James, and it sounded to me at the time as if he knew what he was talking about."

"Of course!" Sandy said, slapping his forehead in exasperation. "I don't know why I didn't think of it! Jerry was a Sea Scout in Oceanhead before his family moved to Valley View. It's just that he's

become so much a part of this town that I forget he didn't grow up here with the rest of us. I think he was a Sea Scout for about three years, and he had been sailing before he ever joined up. I'm sure he can do it!"

"Well," his father said, "you'd better hunt him up fast and find out whether he can and will. Your uncle expects us to call him back within a couple of hours to give him an answer, because he's leaving the country in two days and he wants to get this settled before he goes."

He had hardly finished his sentence before Sandy was out of the workshop, on his bike, and tearing down the tree-shaded street. He was sure that Jerry would be able to do it! He remembered their conversation well, now that his father had reminded him of it, and he recalled that Jerry had said that he practically grew up on boats, and that they were the only thing that he missed since moving to Valley View. In the close friendship that had grown up between them in the last couple of years, Sandy could not think of one time that Jerry had promised something that he did not deliver. If he said he could do something, he could do it! Sandy smiled, remembering Jerry's early days in Valley View, his modest admission that he "could

play a little baseball," and his first day on the diamond. Jerry had immediately shown himself to be the best high school catcher in the county. With Sandy as pitcher, they had developed into an almost unbeatable battery.

As he pedaled toward the drugstore owned by Jerry's father, Sandy hoped that they would be able to carry their teamwork on in this new venture. He could still hardly believe his Uncle Russ's offer of a sailboat, provided he could find someone to teach him how to sail. Like most boys, he had read and enjoyed sea stories, although many of the words used were strange and meaningless to him. In his reading, he had often pictured himself at sea, steering a tall ship through white-capped seas. A confused series of sailing words went through his mind: bow, stern, helm, topgallant sails, mizzen, poop deck, quarter-deck, galley, batten the hatches, go aloft . . .

He was suddenly brought back to land as he narrowly missed running his bike into Pepper March, who refused to hurry for a mere bike. Putting the sea dreams firmly out of his mind, he continued more carefully until he pulled up in front of James's Drugstore, where he put his bike in the rack under the green-and-white striped

awning and hurried into the cool, vanilla-smelling store.

Jerry was behind the counter, making up a pineapple ice-cream soda for Quiz Taylor who, with two empty glasses in front of him, was impatiently waiting for the third.

Sandy climbed onto the stool next to the stubby Quiz and impatiently waited until Jerry was through making the soda. When the concoction was safely delivered into Quiz's eager hands, Sandy said, "Jerry, I've got some real exciting news! In fact, it's so exciting that I didn't want to tell you while you still had that soda in your hands. I was afraid you'd toss the whole thing into the air!"

Having firmly secured both his friends' attention, Sandy told them about the phone call from his Uncle Russ, the offer of the boat, the need for instruction and the whole story. When he had finished, Jerry's lantern-jawed face was lit up with a 500-watt grin.

"It sounds as if this is going to be the best vacation of my life!" he said. "A boat! I can hardly wait to get going!"

Sandy sighed with relief. "Then you're sure you can handle it?" he asked.

"That's a good question," Jerry said, running a

hand over his close-cropped inky hair. "To tell you the truth, I don't know because you haven't told me yet what kind of a boat it is. There are plenty that I wouldn't even say I could act as a decent crew member on. Do you know what kind it is?"

"Why . . . why . . . it's a sailboat!" Sandy said. "I mean, that's all I know about it. Does it make much difference?"

Jerry laughed. "There are almost as many different kinds of boats as there are people," he said. "Nobody but a real Master Mariner would just answer that he could sail anything. It's like being an airplane pilot. If you got your pilot's license flying a Piper Cub, you wouldn't be exactly ready to fly a four-engine jet bomber!"

"Still," Quiz interrupted thoughtfully, "the principle remains the same in both. It's simply a question of creating a high-speed airstream, so directed as to pass over and under an aerodynamically shaped surface which, because of the varying degree of arc and the cambered sections and angle of attack, produces a lift, drag and momentum proportional to the density of the air, the square of the speed and the area of the wing or airfoil. It's simple! What's more, a sailboat works

the same way." Looking pleased with himself, Quiz happily returned his attention to the pineapple soda.

"Why, Quiz!" Sandy said. "I didn't know you could fly!"

"Fly!" Quiz looked up from his soda with a grimace. "The very thought of flying makes me sick. If I don't hold on to the banister, I get dizzy when I go up to bed at night!"

All three boys laughed, for this side of Quiz's personality was a standing joke with them. Quiz, formally known as Clyde Benson Taylor, was a virtual encyclopedia of obscure information. While he could tell you vast amounts about nearly every human activity, the very idea of taking part in an activity usually upset him.

"So much for theory," Jerry said. "Now, to get back to the practical realities of sailing a boat—I'd have to know a few things about the kind of sailboat you have before I'd be willing to give an answer. There are all kinds of boats, of all different sizes. There are sloops, cats, cutters, yawls, ketches, schooners and a hundred variations. Did your Uncle Russ give you any idea of what he has for you?"

"I think he said it was a sloop," Sandy said. "And he did say that while it was large enough to

sleep on and take out on a cruise, it was a pretty small boat. He said that anyone who knew how to sail would know how to handle it."

"That sounds right to me," Jerry said. "I didn't think that he'd want to start you off with a complicated rig or a big boat. If it's the kind of thing I think it is, I'm sure I can sail it, and teach you too."

"Will I have to learn all about yardarms and fore-topgallant sails and things like that?" Sandy asked, somewhat doubtfully.

"Not for quite a while," Jerry laughed. "You've been reading too many books about pirates and whalers in the old days. You only find all those complicated sail and rigging names on the big square-rigged ships—the ones with three and four masts. If your boat is a sloop, it only has one mast, one mainsail, and a choice of maybe three other sails, flown one at a time with the mainsail. There's nothing much to learn compared with the old full-rigged ships with up to four masts."

"Five," Quiz said.

"I never heard of one with more than four," Jerry commented.

As if he were reading from a book buried deep in his pineapple soda, Quiz mumbled around the straws, "The steel ship *Preussen* was the only five-

mast full-rigged ship ever built. It was 408 feet long, had masts 223 feet high, yardarms over 100 feet long and 47 sails totaling 50,000 square feet."

Even though Sandy was used to this sort of thing from Quiz, he was more impressed than usual. "How would you like to come with us, Quiz?" he asked.

"Who, me?" Quiz looked shocked. "I don't know the first thing about boats! No, thanks—I'll stay safe ashore!"

The next half hour was spent in excitedly discussing the trip to come, the possibilities of sailing, the things Sandy would have to learn, and the equipment that he and Jerry would have to take along. Finally Sandy remembered that his Uncle Russ was expecting a phone call, and that Jerry still had to get his parents' permission to make the trip. They agreed to go back to Sandy's house and let John Steele make the call to Jerry's father so that the adults could satisfy themselves about the wisdom of letting the boys take a three-day cruise for Sandy's first trip.

Leaving Quiz in charge of the drugstore's soda fountain, they quickly biked to the Steele home, where Sandy's father agreed to make the call.

Getting Jerry's parents' consent to the trip proved not to be a difficult task. Mr. and Mrs.

James obviously had a good deal of confidence in Jerry's ability to handle a sailboat, and both sets of parents felt that their level-headed sixteen-year-olds could take such a trip on their own. In short order, all of the details were worked out, and Sandy was once more on the long-distance phone to speak with his Uncle Russ in San Francisco.

"It's okay!" he shouted, as soon as his uncle answered the telephone. "Jerry James, my best friend, used to be a Sea Scout and knows all about boats. His parents say he's a good sailor. We're ready to start any time you want!"

He listened for a minute to his uncle, then said, "Swell! We'll be ready. And thanks a million for the boat!" Hanging up the phone, he turned to his father, mother and Jerry with a wide grin.

"Uncle Russ sure doesn't waste any time," he said. "He's leaving now and expects to be down here tonight. He says that we'd better get all packed and ready, because he wants to take us up to Cliffport tomorrow morning, and we'll have to leave here by six o'clock!"

CHAPTER TWO

Make Ready to Sail!

"THERE'S ONE GOOD THING about riding in this little sports car," Sandy said, and laughed as he eased his cramped six-foot length out of his Uncle Russ's low-slung red racer. "It's going to make the sailboat seem as roomy as a yacht in comparison!"

Sandy pushed his cowlick out of his eyes and stretched as his uncle and his friend Jerry followed him out of the little car.

"Don't worry about the size of the boat," Jerry said. "I'll guarantee that it's going to seem pretty big and complicated, no matter how small it actually is, until you've learned how to sail it. In fact, you're going to find that a boat is a whole new

world, full of all kinds of new things to get used to. And from what your uncle told us about this one, it'll be more than big enough to keep us both busy for a couple of summers to come."

"I feel as if we're in a whole new world already," Sandy replied, "and we're not even on board yet!" He looked about him at the beehive of activity that was the Cliffport Boat Yard. "I've never seen anything like this before!"

From all sides came the sounds of hammering and sawing, and the thin whine of electric sanders. The brisk, salty smell of the sea was mingled with the sharp odors of paint, varnish and turpentine and the peculiar, half-sweet smell of marine engine fuel.

Boats of every size and description were ranged about them. Towering high above them, resting in specially built cradles, were long hulls with deep, weighted keels like giant fins under them. Heavy frames and timbers held these boats upright, and ladders leaned against them to where their decks joined their sides, high overhead. Men scrambled up and down the ladders with tools and equipment, or sat on the scaffolds and frames, painting.

Smaller craft without keels were braced in cradles or frames on the ground, or lay bottoms

up on racks made of heavy beams that looked like railroad ties. Some of the boats were having their bottoms scraped, some were being sanded, others were in the process of painting.

At one nearby boat, Sandy saw men hammering on the bottom of the hull with big wooden mallets. Jerry explained that these were calking hammers, and that they were used to drive oakum into the seams between the planks to make the boats watertight for sailing. When the boats were put in the water later on, he added, the planks would swell and form waterproof joints where the planks met.

On both sides, lines of railroad tracks led from the boat yard and the big sheds straight down to the water's edge and on into the water. Boats on wheeled flatcars stood on the rails here and there, ready to be eased down the tracks into the water for launching. Jerry explained how, when the flatcars with their cradles had gone down the slope and were under water, the boats simply floated away from them. Then the launching device would be hauled back up the tracks for use on another boat.

Sandy looked about him in bewilderment at the variety of boats in the yard. There were small boats with one mast, larger ones with two, cabin

cruisers with no masts at all, and one sleek, beautiful, black-hulled boat with three tall masts. He was just beginning to think that he had found some relationship between the size of the boat and the number of masts when he spotted what appeared to be one of the largest hulls in the boat yard, with one immense mast. Next to it was a far smaller boat with two. Sandy thought to himself that there didn't appear to be any simple rules to the business of boat designing. All in all the bustling Cliffport Boat Yard was a thoroughly confusing sight for Sandy, and a pretty exciting one, too.

As a matter of fact, the entire last two days had been pretty confusing and exciting, Sandy reflected. Just two days ago, he had started on his spring vacation from Valley View High School with not a thing to do but loaf around home. Now, suddenly, he was the owner of a sailboat he had never seen, and he was preparing to take a two-hundred-mile cruise down the coast! A two-hundred-mile cruise—and he had never even been on board a sailboat!

Looking at the maze of masts and rigging around him, Sandy sensed for the first time some of the complications of handling a boat. Laying a hand on his friend's shoulder, he said, "Boy, Jerry,

I sure hope you can sail this boat alone! If what I see around me is a sample, I'm afraid I'm going to be too confused to do more than just watch you and maybe ask a few simple-minded questions!"

"Don't worry about it," Jerry said with a grin. "It's not anywhere near as complicated as it looks at first sight. I learned to handle a boat fairly well in just a few summers at the shore, plus some instruction in the Sea Scouts, and I didn't even have my own boat so that I could sail regularly. One season of working your own boat will probably turn you into a first-rate skipper!"

Then Jerry frowned for a minute and ran his hand over his hair. "Speaking of being a skipper," he began awkwardly, "you realize, I guess, that I'll have to act as skipper of this boat at first? I mean, I know it's your boat and all, but . . ."

Sandy laughed. "You go right ahead and take charge! I'll be more than happy to take orders from you. After all, somebody on board has to be in charge, and it's a good idea to have it be someone who knows what he's in charge of!"

"Fine," Jerry said, looking relieved. "If you just keep up that kind of attitude, you'll be the best kind of a crew member that any skipper could ask for!"

Sandy's Uncle Russ had been waiting by his car

while the boys had been talking and taking in the sights, sounds and smells of the Cliffport Boat Yard. Now he moved over to join them. "The trunk of the car is open," he said, "and your sea bags are in there. And that's as much as I intend to do about it. I don't know much about sailors, but if they're anything at all like soldiers, they carry their own packs! Now let's get going!"

The boys grinned sheepishly and ran to the back of the car to gather their equipment, and Russell Steele relaxed and dropped his mock military manner. An ex-general of the United States Army, he often kidded Sandy and his friends by pretending that they were soldiers in his command. This time, he reflected, it was very nearly true. In the same way that a general must feel a responsibility toward the men he sends out on a mission, Russell Steele felt responsible for Sandy and Jerry as they were preparing to set out on this trip.

After all, he reminded himself, the trip had been his idea, and the sailboat had been his present to Sandy. He had been using the boat during the last few months while doing some research on special underwater equipment for the government, and now he no longer had any need for it. As Vice President of World Dynamics Corporation, Rus-

sell Steele was in charge of the New Projects Division. World Dynamics was a sprawling concern with almost unlimited interests, often in the most secret kinds of affairs, and his work with it often called him to different parts of the world. He had found his stay in Cliffport a pleasant change from some of the remote and often primitive places he had been forced to settle in in the past. Now, however, he was off again, to one more secret destination. He wouldn't be in a position to use a sailboat again for a long time to come.

Sandy's Uncle Russ had been brought up on the seacoast of California. While his brother, Sandy's father, had become fascinated with the rocks and geological formations of the nearby mountains and deserts, he had gone in the other direction to the shores of the Pacific. During nearly all of his boyhood he had puttered around boats and boat yards.

Although Russell Steele had spent most of his adult life in the Army (and maybe because of it) he had always had a soft spot in his heart for the sport of sailing. He had regretted that Sandy, his only nephew, lived inland in Valley View where he was unable to share in this enthusiasm. But Valley View was only a couple of hours from the seacoast and now that Sandy was old enough to

drive a car, it would be possible for him to own and enjoy a sailboat.

Uncle Russ thought of all this, and then he wondered whether it had been a good idea to suggest that the boys bring the sloop all the way down from Cliffport on their very first sail. Still, he mused, Jerry seemed like a responsible lad, and he had said that he knew how to handle a boat well enough to make such a trip. And Sandy learned fast and was good with his hands. Well, the General thought to himself, we'll just have to give them their heads and let them try it to see how they make out. . . .

At that moment in his reflections, the boys joined him with their luggage, and all three started through the boat yard to the waterfront. As they picked their way through the clutter of boats, scrap lumber, railroad tracks and equipment, they passed close by the side of a boat standing on the ways about to be launched. Sandy ran his hand over the gleaming paintwork of the hull, and found that it was as smooth as glass. Jerry explained that great care was given to getting a smooth paint job, because the greatest force working against a boat to slow it down is the friction created by the water passing over the hull. Good racing boats, he told Sandy, are hauled out of the

water to be cleaned and painted several times in a season.

Their walk had by now led them down to the water's edge, where they walked along a weathered wharf. A light, early-morning haze made the colors of the sailboats that floated in the bay seem soft and pale. The water and the sky appeared to be one single surface, with no break or horizon line to indicate where one stopped and the other began. The boat-yard flag on its mast atop the main shed fluttered lazily in a mild breeze, and a gentle ground swell made soft, lapping sounds under the wharf.

Strolling along, they came to a long, steeply sloping gangway that descended to a floating dock, to which were tied several small sailboats that rocked quietly on the smooth swell of Cliffport Bay.

Russell Steele took his pipe out of his mouth and pointed with it. "See there?" he said. "The third sloop—the one with the white hull and the green decks and the varnished mast—that's your new sailboat, Sandy, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I have."

Before he had finished his sentence, Sandy and Jerry were down the steep gangway, racing along the floating dock to where the trim, white sloop

was tied. Russ Steele smiled, replaced his pipe in his mouth, and followed at a pace almost as fast as the boys'.

"It's a beauty!" Sandy panted, pushing his hair back from his eyes. "What slick lines! And look at how roomy the cabin is! And look at the height of the mast! And all that rigging!"

His grin faded, and a look of bewilderment spread across his face. "Boy, I can sure say that again! Just look at all that rigging! How am I supposed to know what to do with what and when to do it, Jerry?"

Jerry laughed, and jumped lightly into the small cockpit. "Come on board, skipper, and we'll start your first sailing lesson by showing you around and telling you the names of things. It's not half as complicated as it looks. In fact, this sloop rig is just about the simplest there is. As soon as you learn what to call things, you'll have the hardest part of the lesson over with."

Sandy followed Jerry into the cockpit, then paused to turn and face his uncle, who was still standing on the dock. "How about you, Uncle Russ?" he asked. "Will you stick around for a little while and take the first sail with us?"

"Thanks for asking, Sandy," Russell Steele answered, "but much as I'd like to come along

with you, I can't manage it. I have to be back in my office this afternoon for an important conference. In fact, I'll just about make it if I get started now. But before I get under way, and before you get carried away with the fine art of sailing, there are a few things that you'll need to know."

He talked rapidly and uninterruptedly for about five minutes and, when he had finished, Sandy appreciated for the first time how thoroughly well-organized his Uncle Russ was. His preparations for the boys' trip had been complete in every last detail. Russell Steele's practiced military mind had reviewed the situation and had missed nothing that might be needed.

The sailboat had been fully provisioned for more than a week of sailing, and had been equipped for every possible emergency as well as for a routine and pleasant cruise. The small cabin contained an alcohol cookstove and a good supply of canned food. Every locker and storage place was full, and everything put on board had been chosen with care and an eye for both comfort and necessity.

A complete tool chest was stowed in its cubby with several boxes of spare hardware, ship fittings, nuts and bolts, wire and odd tackle. A drawer

under one of the bunks contained a whole assortment of fishing equipment. Another carried an odd mixture of things that the boys might want, even including clothespins for drying garments, and a sewing kit. A specially made bag contained another sewing kit, this one for sails and canvas repair.

In a narrow, hanging locker in the forward part of the cabin were two complete foul-weather suits consisting of waterproof pants and jackets with hoods. Below them were two pairs of sea boots.

Opposite this was the small enclosed "head," sailor's word for bathroom. No bigger than a telephone booth, it still managed to contain a toilet and a sink, plus a cabinet for medicines and first-aid supplies and another for towels, soap, toothbrushes and the like.

"The only things that you won't find on board yet," Russell Steele concluded, "are your sleeping bags and your air mattresses. I've ordered special ones that the local store didn't have in stock, and they're not due to arrive until tomorrow. For tonight, you'll have to plan on sleeping ashore, but I've taken care of that for you, too. I've got a room reserved for you at the Cliffport Hotel. After tomorrow, you can sleep on board, like sailors."

He scowled at his pipe for several seconds, as if he hoped to see in it some hint of anything that he might have forgotten to take care of, and he mentally checked each item again. Sails okay? Charts and navigating instruments in place? Food? Tools? Spare lines? Life jackets? Oars for the dinghy? Cleaning equipment? Sea anchor? Everything checked out. At last, satisfied that all was in good order, he smiled and clamped the pipe in his teeth again.

"I think," he said, "the only thing I've forgotten is the seagoing way to say goodbye!"

He settled for "Ahoy!" and "Smooth sailing!" and, brushing off Sandy's thanks, walked briskly up the gangway without turning back.

The boys watched him as he turned the corner of the main shed and walked out of sight, then they gave all their attention to a close survey of their new floating home.

CHAPTER THREE

Shakedown Cruise

"WELL, JERRY, what do you think of it?" Sandy asked his friend, as he cast a proud eye along the sleekly shaped length of the little sloop.

"Not 'it,' " Jerry said. "You should say 'her.' You always call boats 'she' or 'her,' though I've never met a sailor who could tell you why."

Jerry looked critically down the twenty-four-foot length of the sloop. "She looks really seaworthy," he said, "and she looks pretty fast, too. Of course, this is not a racing boat, you know. They use this kind mostly for day sailing and for short cruises. Even so, she looks as if she'll go. Of course, we can't really tell until we've tried her,

and I don't think we'll be ready to try anything fast for a little while yet."

Noticing the flicker of disappointment that crossed Sandy's face, Jerry added, "I'd rather have a boat like this than any racing machine ever built. And I'm not saying that just to make you feel better about not having a racer. There's not much difference in actual speed between a really fast boat and an ordinary good boat of the same size. But there sure is a lot of difference in comfort. And I like my comfort when I go for a cruise."

"Why should a racing boat be uncomfortable?" Sandy asked.

"It's not uncomfortable for racing, or for day sailing," Jerry answered, "but a racing boat of this size wouldn't be fitted out for cruising at all. You see, to get the most speed out of a boat, designers make sure that the hull is kept as light as possible and as streamlined as possible, too. A light hull will ride with less of its surface in the water, and that cuts down on the amount of friction. You remember what I told you about friction before?"

Sandy nodded, and Jerry went on. "Streamlining the hull shape helps it to cut through the water without making a lot of waves at the bow to hold it back. Not only that, but to make the

boat really as fast as possible, most designers want to streamline the decks, too. That way, even the air resistance is lowered. Well, when you streamline the hull, you make less cabin space below. Then when you streamline the decks, you have to lower the cabin roof so that it's level with the decks. You can see that in a small boat like this, you wind up with no cabin at all."

"I see," Sandy said. "But how does the lightness of the hull affect comfort? I'm not so sure I understand that."

"When you have a light hull," Jerry replied, "it's a good idea to keep it light. If you overload it, you lose the advantage you built into it in the first place. That means that you can't carry all the stuff we have on board to make for comfortable, safe cruising. Our bunks, the galley, the head, the spare anchor, all the tools and supplies—it adds up to a lot of weight. If you want a really fast boat, you have to leave all that stuff behind."

"Then if this were a racing boat," Sandy said, "we wouldn't have anything more than a small cockpit and a lot of deck, with a little storage space! No wonder you said you'd rather have a boat like this! But there's one thing I'd still like to know. You said that there wasn't much dif-

ference in real speed between a racing boat and an ordinary good boat. How much is 'not much'?"

Jerry thought for a minute. "Well—" he said, at length—"I'd have to know a lot more about boat design than I know to give you an accurate answer, but I can give you a rough idea. This is a twenty-four-foot boat. If it were a racing hull, you might get eight and a half or maybe even nine knots out of it under ideal conditions. For practical purposes, you can figure eight or less. A knot, by the way, is a nautical mile, and it's a little more than a regular mile. When you say eight knots, you mean eight nautical miles an hour."

"But that's not fast!" Sandy objected. "You said that's what a fast racing boat would do!"

Jerry smiled. "Believe me, Sandy," he said, "when your boat is heeling way over and your decks are awash and your sails are straining full of wind, it seems like an awful lot of speed! You'll see when we get out today. Besides, speed is all relative. A really dangerous speed on a bike would seem like a slow crawl in a car."

"I guess you're right," Sandy answered. "But you didn't tell me how fast this boat will go, compared to a racer."

"I think we'll get five or six knots out of her," Jerry replied thoughtfully. "That's not fast, but

it's only a couple of knots slower than the fastest. You see now what I mean?"

Sandy nodded, then said, "I'm with you, Jerry. Now that I know a little bit about it, I sure think you're right. I'd much rather have a boat we can sleep on and take on trips up and down the coast than a racer that doesn't even go so fast! Besides, I'd be pretty foolish to think about any other kind of boat at all, wouldn't I? I don't even have the least idea of how to sail this one yet! Come on, Jerry, start showing me!"

As Jerry carefully explained the different parts of the rigging, the complicated-looking series of wires and ropes around the mast began to look a whole lot simpler to Sandy. The first thing he learned was that not much of the rigging moved or was used for actual sailing of the boat. The parts that didn't move were called "standing rigging," and if you eliminated them from your thoughts, it made the "running rigging" comparatively easy to understand.

"You have to learn about the rigging first," Jerry said. "The idea is simple enough. The standing rigging is used to support the mast and keep it from bending to either side or to the front or back when the sails start to put pressure on it. The standing rigging is every line or cable you see

that comes from the top of the mast or near it down to the outer edge of the deck or to the bow or stern."

Sandy looked about the little sloop, and noticed that this seemed to take care of more than half of what he saw.

"The running rigging," Jerry went on, "is used to raise and lower the sails and to control their position to catch the wind when you're sailing. The lines that are used to raise and lower the sails on the mast are called halyards. They work just like the ropes on a flagpole. The other kind of running rigging—the lines used to control the way the sails set—are called sheets. You'd think that a sheet was a sail, wouldn't you? It isn't, though. It's the line that controls a sail."

"I think I understand so far," Sandy said, "but don't you think it would be easier for me to learn if we went out for a sail and I could see everything working?"

"Right," Jerry said. "That's just what I was going to say next. Telling you this way makes me feel too much like a schoolteacher!"

Jerry decided that it would not be a good idea to try to sail away from the dock, because the part of the harbor they were in was so crowded. There would be little room to maneuver with

only the light morning winds to help them. The best thing to do, he concluded, was to move the boat to a less crowded part of the harbor. At the same time, he would teach Sandy the way to get away from a mooring. In order to do all this, Jerry explained, they would row out in the dinghy, towing the sloop behind them. Once out in open water, they would tie the dinghy behind them and pull it along as they sailed.

Together they unlashed the dinghy, which was resting on chocks on the cabin roof. Light and easy to handle, the dinghy was no trouble at all to launch, and in a minute it was floating alongside, looking like a cross between a canoe and a lightweight bathtub.

Getting into the dinghy carefully, so as not to upset its delicate balance, they untied the sloop from the dock. Then they fastened the bow line of the sloop to a ring on the stern of the dinghy, got out the stubby oars and started to row.

At first, it took some strong pulling at the oars to start the sailboat moving away from the dock, and Sandy feared that they would tip over the frail cockleshell of the dinghy. But once the sloop started to move, Sandy found that it took surprisingly little effort to tow it along. It glided easily behind them, its tall mast swaying overhead, as

they rowed slowly out into the waters of Cliffport Bay.

"We'll find an empty mooring, and tie up for a few minutes," Jerry said. "I don't think that anyone will mind. I want to show you the method we'll use most of the time for getting under way." He pointed to the anchorage area, or "holding ground," as it was called, and Sandy noticed several blocks of painted wood floating about. They had numbers, and some had small flags on them. "Those are moorings," Jerry explained. "They're just permanent anchors, with floats to mark the spot and to hold up the end of the mooring line. Every boat owner has his own mooring to come in to. The people who own these empty moorings are probably out sailing for the day, and we won't interfere if we use one for a while."

Easing back on the oars, they let the sloop lose momentum and came to a natural stop near one of the moorings. They transferred the bow line from the dinghy to the mooring and made the sloop fast in its temporary berth. Then they climbed back on board and tied the dinghy behind them. Jerry explained that a long enough scope of line should be left for the dinghy so as to keep it from riding up and overtaking the sloop, as acci-

dents of this sort have been known to damage the bow of a fragile dinghy.

This done, Jerry busied himself by unlashing the boom and the rudder to get them ready to use, while Sandy went below for the sail bags. These were neatly stacked in a forward locker, each one marked with the name of the type of sail it contained. He selected the ones marked "main" and "jib," as Jerry had asked him to, and brought them out into the cockpit.

Making the mainsail ready to hoist, Sandy quickly got the knack of threading the sail slides onto the tracks on the mast and the boom. He worked at this while Jerry made the necessary adjustments to the halyards and fastened them to the heads of the sails. When this job was done, Sandy slid the foot of the sail aft along the boom, and Jerry made it fast with a block-and-tackle arrangement which was called the "clew outhaul."

"Now," Jerry said, when they had finished, "it's time to hoist the mainsail!"

"What about the mooring?" Sandy asked. "Don't you want me to untie the boat from it first?"

"Not yet," Jerry answered. "We won't do that until we're ready to go."

"But won't we start going as soon as we pull up the mainsail?" said Sandy, puzzled.

"No," Jerry said. "Nothing will happen when we hoist the sail. It's like raising a flag. The flag doesn't fill with wind and pull at the flagpole like a sail, does it? It just points into the wind and flutters. That's just what the mainsail will do. You see, the boat is already pointing into the wind, because the wind has swung us around on the mooring. You look around and you'll see that all the boats out here are heading in the exact same direction, toward the wind. When we hoist the sail, it'll act just like a flag, and flap around until we're ready to use it. Then we'll make it do what we want it to by using the jib and controlling its position with the sheets. Look."

Jerry hauled on the main halyard, and the sail slid up its tracks on the mast, squeaking and grating. As it reached the masthead, it fluttered and bellied loosely in the wind, doing nothing to make the boat move in any direction. Motioning to Sandy to take his place tugging at the halyard, Jerry jumped down into the cockpit.

The halyard ran from the pointed head of the sail up through a pulley at the top of the mast, then down to where Sandy was hauling on it. Below his hands, it passed through another pulley

near Sandy's feet, then back along the cabin roof. Jerry, from his position in the cockpit, grabbed the end of the halyard and hauled tight, taking the strain from Sandy. Then he tied it down to a wing-shaped cleat on the cabin roof near the cockpit.

This was done with a few expert flips of the wrist. The mainsail was up, and tightly secured.

"There," Jerry said. "Now we're almost ready. We won't move at all until we get the jib up, and even then we won't move unless we want to. When we want to, we'll untie from the mooring and get away as neat as you please."

They then took the jib out of its sail bag and made ready to hoist it. Instead of securing to the mast with slides on a track the way the mainsail had, the jib had a series of snaps stitched to its forward edge. These were snapped around the steel wire forestay, a part of the standing rigging that ran from the bow of the boat to a position high up on the mast. The jib halyard was fastened to the head of the jib, the snaps were put in place, and a few seconds of work saw the jib hanging in place, flapping before the mast. Then Jerry asked Sandy to pick up the mooring that they had tied to, and to walk aft with it.

"When you walk aft with the mooring," Jerry explained, "you actually put some forward motion

on the boat. Then, when you get aft and I tell you to throw the mooring over, you put the bow a little off the wind by doing it."

Sandy untied the bow line from the mooring, and walked to the stern of the boat, holding the mooring float as he had been told. Then, when Jerry said "Now!" he threw the mooring over with a splash.

"With the jib flying and the boat free from the mooring and no longer pointing directly into the wind," Jerry said, "the wind will catch the jib and blow our bow even further off. At the same time, I'll steer to the side instead of straight ahead. As soon as our bow is pointing enough away from the wind, the breeze will strike our sails from one side, and they'll start to fill. When the sails have caught the wind right, I'll ease off on the rudder, and we'll be moving ahead."

By this time, the morning haze had "burned off" and the light breeze had freshened into a crisp, steady wind. As the head of the little sloop "fell away" from the direction from which the wind was coming, the sails swelled, the boat leaned slightly to one side, and a ripple of waves splashed alongside the hull. Sandy looked back and saw that the bow of the dinghy, trailing be-

hind them, was beginning to cut a small white wave through the water.

"We're under way!" Jerry cried. "Come on over here, skipper! You take the tiller and learn how to steer your boat while I handle the sails and show you what to do!"

Sandy slid over on the stern seat to take Jerry's place, and held the tiller in the position he had been shown, while Jerry explained how to trim the sails and how to go where you wanted to go instead of where the wind wanted to take you.

"I'll take care of the sail trimming," Jerry said. "All you have to do is keep the boat heading on the course she's sailing now. The wind is pretty much at our backs and off to the starboard side. You have to keep it that way, and especially keep the stern from swinging around to face the wind directly. It's not hard to do. Just pick a landmark and steer toward it."

He looked ahead to where a point of land jutted out some miles off the mainland. A lighthouse tower made an exclamation mark against the sky.

"Just steer a little to the right of that," he said, "and we can't go wrong."

"What if the wind shifts?" Sandy asked. "How can we tell?"

Jerry pointed to the masthead, where a small triangular metal flag swung. "Just keep an eye on that," he said. "It's called a hawk, and it's a sailor's weathervane."

"With one eye on the lighthouse and one eye on the masthead," Sandy laughed, "I'm going to look awfully silly!"

He leaned back in the stern seat with the tiller tucked under his arm. The little sloop headed steadily for the lighthouse, steering easily. Every few seconds, Sandy glanced at the hawk to check the wind. He grinned and relaxed. He was steering his own boat! The sail towered tall and white against the blue sky above him and the water gurgled alongside and in the wake behind where the dinghy bobbed along like a faithful puppy.

"This is the life!" he sighed.

Jerry pointed out a handsome, white-hulled, two-masted boat approaching them. "Isn't that a beauty?" he said. "It's a ketch. On a ketch, the mainmast is taller than the mizzen. That's how you tell the difference."

"How do you tell the difference between the mainmast and the mizzen?" Sandy asked. "You're going to have to start with the simplest stuff with me."

"The mainmast is always the one in front, and

the mizzen is always the one aft," Jerry explained. "A ketch has a taller main; a schooner has a taller mizzen; a yawl is the same as a ketch, except that the mizzen is set aft of the tiller. Got it?"

Sandy shook his head and wondered if he would ever get all of this straight in his head. It was enough trying to learn the names of things on his own boat without worrying about the names of everything on other boats in the bay.

As the ketch sailed by, the man at her tiller waved a friendly greeting. The boys waved back and Sandy watched the big ketch go smoothly past, wondering how much harder it might be to sail a two-masted boat of that size than it was to sail a relatively small sloop such as his own. Certainly it could not be as simple as the sloop, he thought. Why this little sailboat was a whole lot easier than it had seemed to be at first. As a matter of fact . . .

"Duck your head!" Jerry yelled.

Not even stopping to think, Sandy dropped his head just in time to avoid being hit by the boom, which whizzed past barely a few inches above him! With a sharp crack of ropes and canvas, the sail filled with wind on the opposite side of the boat from where it had been a moment before, and the sloop heeled violently in the same direction.

Jerry grabbed at the tiller, hauled in rapidly on the mainsheet, and set a new course. Then, calming down, he explained to Sandy what had happened.

"We jibed," he said. "That means that you let the wind get directly behind us and then on the wrong side of us. The mainsail got the wind on the back of it, and the wind took it around to the other side of the boat. Because the sheets were let out all the way, there was nothing to restrain the sail from moving, and by the time it got over, it was going at a pretty fast clip. You saw the results!"

Jerry adjusted the mainsail to a better position relative to the wind, trimming it carefully to keep it from bagging, then he went on to explain. "A jibe can only happen when you've got the wind at your back. That's called sailing downwind, or sailing before the wind, or running free. It's the most dangerous point of sail, because of the chance of jibing. When the wind is strong, an uncontrolled jibe like the one we just took can split your sails, or ruin your rigging, or even snap your boom or your mast. Not to mention giving you a real bad headache if you're in the way of that boom!"

"I can just imagine," Sandy said, thinking of

the force with which the boom had whizzed by. Then he added, "You said something about an 'uncontrolled jibe,' I think. Does that mean that there's some way to control it?"

"I should have said an accidental jibe instead of an uncontrolled one," Jerry said. "A deliberate or planned jibe is always controlled, and it's a perfectly safe and easy maneuver. All you have to do is to haul in on the sheet, so that the boom won't have any room for free swinging. Then you change your course to the new tack, let out the sail, and you're off with no trouble."

Sandy grinned. "I'm afraid that description went over my head as fast as the boom did—only a whole lot higher up!"

"Things always sound complicated when you describe them," Jerry said, "but we'll do a couple later, and you'll see how it works."

"Fine," Sandy agreed. "But until we do, how can I keep from doing any more of the accidental variety?"

"The only way to avoid jibing," Jerry replied, "is never to let the wind blow from the same side that the sail is set on. This means that if you feel the wind shift over that way, you have to alter your course quickly to compensate for it. If you don't want to alter your course, then you have to

do a deliberate jibe and alter the direction of the sail. All it means is that you have to keep alert at the tiller, and keep an eye on the hawk, the way I told you, so that you always know which direction the wind is blowing from."

"I guess I was getting too much confidence a lot too soon," Sandy admitted, shamefaced. "There's obviously a lot more to this sailing business than I was beginning to think. Anyway, a jibe is one thing I won't let happen again. I'll stop looking at other boats for a while, and pay more attention to this one! There's more than enough to look at here, I guess."

Once more, Sandy cautiously took the tiller from Jerry. Then he grinned ruefully and said, "Just do me one favor, will you, Jerry?"

"Sure. What?"

"Just don't call me 'skipper' any more. Not for a while, at least!"

CHAPTER FOUR

The Man with the Gun

"JUST KEEP HER SAILING on this downwind course," Jerry said. "Head for that lighthouse the way you were before, and keep an occasional eye on the hawk. As long as the wind isn't dead astern, we shouldn't have any more jibing troubles. As soon as we get out into open water, we'll find an easier point of sail. We can't do that until we're clear of the channel, though. When we are, we'll reach for a while, and then I'll show you how to beat."

"What's reaching?" Sandy asked. "And what's beating? And how do you know when we're out of the channel into open water? And how do you even know for sure that we're in the channel now? And how . . ."

"Whoa! Wait a minute! Let's take one question at a time. A reach is when you're sailing with the wind coming more from the side than from in front or from behind the boat. Beating is when the wind is more in front than on the side, and you have to sail into it. Beating is more like work than fun, but a reach is the fastest and easiest kind of a course to sail. That's why I want to reach as soon as we're out in open water where we can pick our direction without having to worry about channel markers."

"How come reaching is the fastest kind of course to sail?" Sandy asked. "I would have guessed that sailing downwind with the wind pushing the boat ahead of it would be the fastest."

"It sure seems as if it ought to work that way," Jerry said with a grin. "But you'll find that sailboat logic isn't always so simple or easy. When you're running free in front of the wind, you can only go as fast as the wind is blowing. When you're reaching, you can actually sail a lot faster than the wind."

"I'm afraid that I don't understand that," Sandy said. "How does it work?"

Jerry paused and thought for a minute. "You remember what Quiz said about the sailboat working like an airplane? Well, he made it sound

pretty tough to understand, what with all his formulas and proportions, but actually he was right. A sail is a lot like an airplane wing, except that it's standing up on end instead of sticking out to one side. Well, you know that the propellers on a plane make wind, and that the plane flies straight into that wind. You see, the wind that comes across the wing makes a vacuum on top of the wing surface, and the plane is drawn up into the vacuum. You get a lot more lift that way than if the propellers were under the wing and blowing straight up on the bottom of it."

"I see that," Sandy said. "And a propeller blowing under a wing would be pretty much the same as a wind blowing at the back of a sail. Right?"

"Right!" Jerry said, looking pleased with his teaching ability. "Now you have the idea. When you have a sail, like a wing standing up, the air that passes over the sail makes a vacuum in front and pulls the boat forward into it. Actually, the vacuum pulls us forward and to one side, the same as the wind from the propeller makes the plane go forward and up. We use the rudder and the keel to keep us going more straight than sideways."

Sandy shook his head as if to clear away cobwebs. "I think that I understand now, but it's still a little hazy in my mind. Maybe I'll do better

if you don't tell me about the theory, and I just see the way it works."

"Could be," Jerry said. "There are lots of old-time fishermen and other fine sailors who have absolutely no idea of how their boats work, and who wouldn't know a law of physics or a principle of aerodynamics if it sat on their mastheads and yelled at them like a sea gull! They just do what comes naturally, and they know the way to handle a boat without worrying about what makes it run."

Still heading on their downwind course, they passed several small islands and rocks, some marked with lights and towers, some with bells or floating buoys. They seemed to slide by gracefully as the little sloop left the mainland farther behind in its wake.

"Before we get out of the channel," Jerry said, "I want to show you some of the channel markers and tell you about how to read them. They're the road signs of the harbors, and if you know what they mean and what to do about them, you'll never get in any trouble when it comes to finding your way in and out of a port."

He pointed to a nearby marker that was shaped like a pointed rocket nose cone floating in the

water. It was painted a bright red, and on its side in white was painted a large number 4.

"That's called a nun buoy," Jerry told Sandy. "Now look over there. Do you see that black buoy shaped just like an oversized tin can? That's called a can buoy. The cans and the nuns mark the limits of the channel, and they tell you to steer between them. The rule is, when you're leaving a harbor, to keep the red nun buoys on your port side. That's the left side. When you're entering a harbor, keep the red nun buoys on your starboard side. The best way to remember it is by the three R's of offshore navigating: 'Red Right Returning.' "

Sandy nodded. "I understand that all right," he said. "But what are the numbers for?"

"The numbers are to tell you how far from the harbor you are," Jerry said. "Red nun buoys are always even-numbered, and black cans are always odd-numbered. They run in regular sequence, and they start from the farthest buoy out from the shore. For example, we just sailed past red nun buoy number 4. That means that the next can we see will be marked number 3, and it will be followed by a number 2 nun and a number 1 can. After we pass the number 1 can, we'll be com-

pletely out of the channel, and we'll have open water to sail in."

"Do they have the same kind of markers everywhere," Sandy asked, "or do you have to learn them specially for each port that you sail in?"

"You'll find the same marks in almost every place in the world," Jerry said. "But you won't have to worry about the world for a long while. The important thing is that the marking and buoyage system is the same exact standard for every port in the United States and Canada."

"What's that striped can I see floating over there?" Sandy asked, pointing.

Jerry looked at the buoy. "That's a special marker," he answered. "All of the striped buoys have some special meaning, and it's usually marked on the charts. They're mostly used to mark a junction of two channels, or a middle ground, or an obstruction of some kind. You can sail to either side of them, but you shouldn't go too close. At least that's the rule for the horizontally striped ones. The markers with vertical stripes show the middle of the channel, and you're supposed to pass them as close as you can, on either side."

Another few minutes of sailing brought them past the last red buoy, and they were clear of the

marked channel. From here on they were free to sail as they wanted, in any direction they chose to try.

For the next hour they practiced reaching. With the wind blowing steadily from the starboard side, the trim sloop leaned far to the port until the waves were creaming almost up to the level of the deck. Jerry explained that this leaning position, called "heeling," was the natural and proper way for a sailboat to sit in the water. The only way that a boat could sail level, he pointed out, was before the wind. With the boat heeling sharply and the sails and the rigging pulled tight in the brisk breeze, Sandy really began to feel the sense of speed on the water, and understood what Jerry had told him about speed being relative.

After they had practiced on a few long reaches, Jerry showed Sandy how to beat or point, which is the art of sailing more or less straight into the wind.

"Of course you can't ever sail straight into the wind," Jerry said. "The best you can do is come close. If you head right into it, the sails will just flap around the way that they did when we were pointing into the wind at the mooring. You've got to sail a little to one side."

"Suppose you don't want to go to one side?"

Sandy asked. "If the wind is blowing straight from the place you want to get to, what do you do about it?"

"You have to compromise," Jerry replied. "You'll never get there by aiming the boat in that direction. What you have to do is sail for a point to one side of it for a while, then come about and sail for a point on the other side of it for a while. It's a kind of long zigzag course. You call it tacking. Each leg of the zigzag is called a tack."

Sailing into the wind, they tacked first on one side, then on the other. Each time they came about onto a new tack, the mainsail was shifted to the other side of the boat, and the boat heeled in the same direction as the sail. The jib came about by itself, just by loosening one sheet and taking up on the other one. Soon Sandy was used to the continual shifting and resetting of the sails, and to the boom passing back and forth overhead.

Suddenly Sandy pointed and clapped Jerry on the shoulder with excitement. "Look!" he cried. "There's a whole fleet of boats coming this way! They look just like ours! And they're racing!"

Jerry looked up in surprise. "They sure are racing! And they are just like this one! I guess I was wrong when I said they didn't race this kind

of boat. This must be a local class, built to specifications for local race rules. Boy, look at them go! I was wrong about not racing them, but I sure was right when I said that she looked fast!"

The fleet of sloops swept past, heeling sharply to one side, with the crews perched on the high sides as live ballast, and the water foaming white along the low decks which were washed over completely every moment or so. The helmsmen on the nearest of the boats grinned at them and waved an invitation to come along and join the regatta, but neither Jerry nor Sandy felt quite up to sailing a race just yet.

As they watched their white-sailed sisters fly down the bay, Sandy felt for the first time the excitement that could come from handling a boat really well. He turned to his own trim craft with renewed determination to learn everything that Jerry could teach him, and maybe, in due time, a whole lot more than that.

The next few hours were spent in happily exploring Cliffport Bay and trying the sloop on a variety of tacks and courses to learn what she would do. Eventually, the sun standing high above the mast, they realized almost at the same time that it was definitely time for lunch.

Jerry took the helm and the sheet while Sandy went below to see what the boat's food locker could supply. In a few minutes, he poked his head out of the cabin hatch and shook it sadly at Jerry. "It looks as if Uncle Russ didn't think of everything, after all. There's plenty of food all right, but there's not a thing on board to drink. The water jugs are here, but they're bone-dry, and I'm not exactly up to eating peanut butter sandwiches without something to wash them down!"

"Me either!" said Jerry, shuddering a little at the thought. "Of course, we could settle on some of the juice from the canned fruits I saw in there, but we haven't taken on any ice for our ice chest, and that's all going to be pretty warm. In any case, we ought to have some water on board. I think we'd better look for a likely place near shore where we can drop anchor. Then we can take the dinghy in to one of the beach houses and fill up our jugs."

"Good idea," Sandy agreed. "And that way we can eat while we're at anchor, and not have to worry about sailing and eating at the same time."

Several small islands not too far away had houses on them, and the boys decided to set a course for the nearest one. As they drew near,

they saw a sunny white house sitting on the crest of a small rise about a hundred yards back from the water. Below the house, a well-protected and pleasant-looking cove offered a good place for an anchorage. A floating dock was secured to a high stone pier, from which a path could be seen leading up to the house. It looked like an almost perfect summer place, set in broad green lawns, with several old shade trees near the house and with a general atmosphere of well-being radiating from everything.

They glided straight into the little cove, then suddenly put the rudder over hard and brought the sloop sharply up into the wind. The sails flapped loosely, and the boat lost some of its headway, then glided slowly to a stop.

On the bow, Sandy stood ready with the anchor, waiting for Jerry to tell him when to lower it. As the boat began to move a little astern, backing in the headwind, Jerry told Sandy to let the anchor down slowly.

"You never drop an anchor, or throw it over the side. After all, you want the anchor to tip over, and to drive a hook into the bottom. It won't do that if it's just dropped."

When Sandy felt the anchor touch the bottom,

he pulled back gently on the anchor line until he felt the hook take hold. Then, leading the line through the fair lead at the bow, he tied it securely to a cleat on the deck.

Loosening the halyards, they dropped first the jib and then the mainsail, rolled them neatly, and secured them with strips of sailcloth, called stops. Jerry pointed out that it was not necessary to remove the slides and snaps. That way, he explained, it would only be a matter of minutes to get under way when they wanted to. With the last stop tied and the boom and the rudder lashed to keep them from swinging, the sloop was all shipshape at anchor, rocking gently on the swell about fifty yards from the end of the floating dock.

"Let's row the dinghy in to the dock and see if we can find somebody on shore," Jerry suggested. "Of course, with no boats in here, there might not be anyone on the island right now, but I think that I saw a well up by the house, and I'm sure that no one would mind if we helped ourselves to a little water."

But Jerry was wrong on both counts. There was somebody on the island, and he looked far from hospitable. In fact, the tall man who came striding down the path to the float where the boys already had the dinghy headed was carrying a

rifle—and, what was more, he looked perfectly ready to use it at any minute!

"Turn back!" he shouted, as he reached the edge of the stone pier. "Turn back, I tell you, or I'll shoot that dinghy full of holes and sink it right out from under you!" He raised the rifle deliberately to his shoulder and sighted down its length at the boys.

"Wait a minute!" Sandy shouted back. "You're making a mistake! We just need to get some water to drink! We don't mean any harm!"

The man lowered his rifle, but looked no friendlier than before. "I don't care what you want," he called, "but you can just sail off and get it some other place! This is my island and my cove. They're both private property, and you're trespassing here! Now turn that dinghy around and get back to your sailboat and go!"

This speech finished, he raised his rifle to the firing position once more and aimed it at the dinghy.

"All right, mister!" Jerry yelled back at him. "We'll get going! But when we get back to the mainland, you can bet that we're going to report you to the Coast Guard for your failure to give assistance! I'm not sure what they can do about it, but they sure ought to know that there's a char-

acter like you around here! Maybe they'll mark it on the charts, so that sailors in trouble won't waste their time coming in here for help!"

As the boys started to turn the dinghy about, they heard a shout from the man on the pier. "Wait a minute!" he called. "There's no need to get so upset. I'm sorry—but I guess I made a mistake after all. Row on in to the float and I'll get you some water."

Not at all sure that they were doing the wisest thing, but not wanting to anger the strange rifleman by not doing what he had suggested, they decided to risk coming to shore. After all, Sandy reasoned, he hadn't actually threatened to shoot *them*—just the dinghy—and he couldn't do much more harm from close up than from where they were. Besides, both boys were curious about the man and his island. They rowed to the floating dock and made the dinghy fast to a cleat.

"I'm sorry, boys," the man with the rifle said pleasantly. "It's just that I've been bothered in the past by kids landing here for picnics and swimming parties when I'm not here. They leave the beach a mess, and one gang actually broke into the house once, and stole some things. That's why I don't like kids coming around. I thought you were more of the same, but I figured you were

all right when you said that you'd report to the Coast Guard. Those other kids stay as far away from the Coast Guard and the Harbor Police as they can."

He smiled apologetically, but as Sandy started to climb up from the dinghy to the floating dock, his expression hardened once more.

"I said that I'd get you some water," he said, "but I didn't invite you to come ashore and help yourselves to it. You just stay right where you are in that dinghy, and hand me up your water jars. I'll fill them up for you, and I'll be back in a few minutes."

More than a little puzzled, Jerry and Sandy handed up their two soft plastic gallon jugs. Their "host" took them under one arm, leaving the other hand free for his rifle which he carried with a finger lying alongside of the trigger. Without a word, the island's owner walked off.

"I wonder what's the matter with him," Jerry said.

"I don't know," Sandy replied, "but whatever it is, we'd better do what he says, or something pretty bad might be the matter with us!"

Halfway up the path to the house, the tall man stopped, turned back, and looked hard at the boys before continuing on up the hill.

"Mind you do just what I said!" he shouted back over his shoulder. "You just stay in that dinghy, and don't get any fancy ideas about exploring around. If I find you ashore, I'm still as ready as ever to use this gun!"

CHAPTER FIVE

Storm Fears

UNPREDICTABLE as the wind, the man was all smiles when he returned with the two jars filled with water. But he still had his gun.

"I'm glad to see you stayed put in your dinghy," he said. "I kept an eye on you from the hill." He handed down the plastic jugs to Sandy and added, "Sorry I acted so gruff, but you know how it is. I live all alone out here, and even though the island is only a little over a half mile from the mainland it's a pretty isolated spot. I have to be careful of strangers. But I should have seen right away that you boys are all right."

"Thanks," said Sandy. "And thanks for filling our water jugs. We're sorry we bothered you."

They cast the dinghy free, rowed quickly back to the sloop and, as fast as they could manage it, raised the anchor, hoisted the sails and skimmed out of the cove. As they rounded the rocky point that marked the entrance to the cove, they looked back to where the island's lone inhabitant was standing on the dock, watching them out of sight, his rifle still held ready at his hip.

"Boy, that's a strange one!" Sandy said. "I wonder what he's hiding on that island of his—a diamond mine?"

"You never can tell," Jerry replied, "but it's probably nothing at all. I guess the kind of man who would want to live all alone on an island away from people is bound to be pretty crazy about getting all the privacy he can. And as far as I'm concerned, he can have it. From now on, if we need anything, let's head for the mainland!"

Dismissing the mysterious rifleman from their minds, they set out once more to enjoy the pleasures of a brisk wind, blue sky and a trim boat.

The afternoon went swiftly by as Sandy learned more and more about handling his boat, and about the boats they saw sailing near them. Jerry pointed out the different types of boats, explaining more fully than before that the ones with one mast were

called sloops, the two-masted boats were called yawls, ketches and schooners. Telling one from the other was a matter of knowing the arrangement of masts. The ketches had tall mainmasts and shorter mizzens behind them. The yawls had even shorter mizzens, set as far aft as possible. Schooners, with taller mizzen than main, were relatively rare.

Jerry also pointed to varied types of one-masted boats. Not all of them, he told Sandy, were sloops, though most were. The sloops had their mast stepped about one third back from the bow. Cutters had their mast stepped nearly in the center of the boat. In addition, they saw a few catboats, with their single masts stepped nearly in the bows.

Learning all this, plus trying to absorb all that Jerry was telling him about harbor markers, sail handling, steering, types of sails and conditions under which each sail is used, Sandy found the time flying by. Almost before he realized it, the sun was beginning to set and the boats around them were all heading back up the channel to find their moorings and tie up for the night.

Everywhere they looked, the roadstead of Cliffport Bay was as busy as a highway. Sailboats of every description, outboard motorboats, big cabin cruisers, high-powered motor racers, rowboats,

canoes, sailing canoes, kayaks, power runabouts, fishing excursion boats and dozens of other craft were making their way to shore.

The afternoon, which had started so brightly, had become overcast, and the sun glowed sullenly behind a low bank of clouds. The breeze which had been steady but light during the late afternoon hours, suddenly picked up force and became a fairly hard wind. It felt cold and damp after the hot day. Joining the homebound pleasure fleet, Sandy and Jerry picked their way through the now crowded harbor, back to Cliffport Boat Yard.

They arrived in a murky twilight, just a few minutes before the time when it would have become necessary for them to light the lanterns for the red and green running lights demanded by the International Rules of the Road.

The boys decided to drop anchor in the boat yard's mooring area, rather than tow the boat back to the float where it had been tied. This would make it unnecessary to tow the sloop out again for the next day's sailing, when they would start on the long trip home.

They dropped the sails, removed their slides and snaps on mast, boom and forestay, and carefully folded them for replacement in the sail bags. These were stowed below in their locker just

forward of the cabin. Then Sandy and Jerry turned their attention to getting the boat ready for the night.

Sandy helped Jerry rest the boom in its "crutch," a piece of wood shaped like the letter *Y,* which was placed standing upright in a slot in the stern seat. This kept the boom from swinging loose when the boat was unattended, and thus protected both the boat, the boom and the rigging from damage. All the running gear was then lashed down or coiled and put away, the sliding cabin door and hatch cover were closed in place, and the sloop was ready to be left.

"That's what's meant by 'shipshape,' " Jerry said with satisfaction.

As the boys rowed the dinghy back to the float, they felt the first fat drops of rain and they noticed how choppy the still waters of the bay had become. Jerry cast a sailor's eye at the ominously darkening sky.

"That's more than evening coming on," he said. "Unless I miss my guess, we're in for a good storm tonight. To tell you the truth, I'm glad we're staying ashore!"

They lifted the dinghy from the water, turned it over on the float and placed the stubby oars below it. Then, picking up their sea bags, they

ran for the shelter of the shed as the first torrential downpour of the storm washed Cliffport in a solid sheet of blinding rain.

Later that night, after a change of clothes, dinner, and a movie at Cliffport's only theater, the boys sat on their beds in the hotel room and listened to the howling fury of the storm. Raindrops rattled on the windowpanes like hailstones, and through the tossing branches of a tree they could see the riding lights of a few boats in the harbor, rocking violently to and fro. As they watched, the wind sent a large barrel bowling down the street to smash against a light pole, bounce off and roll, erratic as a kicked football, out of sight around a corner.

"It's a good thing we anchored out," Jerry said, watching this evidence of the storm's power. "The boat could really have gotten banged up against the float if we had tied it up where it was before!"

"Do you think it'll be safe where it is now?" Sandy asked anxiously.

"Oh, a little wind and water won't bother a good boat," Jerry answered. "After all, it was made for wind and water! Still . . ." He scowled and shook his head doubtfully.

"Still what?" Sandy said with alarm. "Is there something wrong with the way we left it?"

"Not really," Jerry said. "I'm just worried about one thing. We're not tied to a permanent mooring, the way the other boats around here are. That means that we might drag anchor in a storm as bad as this one, and if we happen to drag into deep water where the anchor can't reach the bottom, the boat could drift a long ways off until it hooked onto something again. And there's always the chance that it could get washed up on the rocks somewhere, first!"

With this unhappy thought in mind, the boys stared out the window for some time in silence as the storm continued unchecked. Finally, knowing that worry couldn't possibly help, and that a good night's sleep would prepare them to meet whatever the morning would bring, they turned out the lights and went to bed.

But, for Sandy, bed was one thing—sleep was another. Although Jerry managed to drop off to slumber in no time, Sandy lay a long time awake staring at the shadows of the tossing tree on the ceiling of the hotel room.

His mind was full of the events of the crowded day. It had been quite a day, starting with the

ride in his uncle's sports car, and proceeding to the new boat and learning to sail. Then the mysterious man on the island, keeping guard with his ever-present rifle, and concluding with a night of powerful storm. He reviewed all this, and mixed with his recollection his new worries about the safety of his boat. A series of images crowded his mind—a vision of the smart sloop lying smashed against some rocky piece of shore was mingled with a memory of the pleasures of his first day of sailing; and somewhere, behind and around all of his thoughts, was the unpleasantly frightening memory of the man with the gun, waiting on his hermit's island.

All of this mingled in his mind with the sound of the storm until Sandy slipped into an uncertain, restless sleep—a sleep filled with vague, shadowy dreams, connected only by a sense that somewhere, something was wrong.

CHAPTER SIX

Something Lost—Something Found!

THE NEXT MORNING, when Sandy and Jerry awoke, the storm that had lashed Cliffport had vanished as if it, too, had been a bad dream.

Cliffport's Main Street, which fronted the bay, was washed clean, and sparkled in the bright morning light. The bay waters themselves even looked cleaner than before, freshly laundered blue and white, with silver points of sunlight sprinkled over their peaceful surface. It was, in short, a perfect sailing day, and the boys could hardly wait to get down to the boat yard to see if the sloop had ridden the storm at anchor.

They dressed hurriedly in their sailing clothes—

blue jeans, sneakers and sweat shirts—and bolted breakfast in the hotel coffee shop. Then, sea bags slung over their shoulders, they raced down the street to the Cliffport Boat Yard, rounded the corner of the main shed and, at the head of the gangway, came to a stop.

Sandy felt a sick, sinking feeling as he scanned the mooring area, searching vainly for a sight of his sloop. But where she had ridden at anchor the night before, there was only a patch of calm blue water.

It hardly seemed possible that she wasn't there. The storm, on this bright, sunny morning, seemed never to have happened. Other boats rode peacefully at their moorings, apparently untouched by the night's wild work. Life in the boat yard and on the bay went on as if nothing had occurred. But Sandy felt as if it were the end of the world.

Slowly and silently, the boys walked down the gangway to where their dinghy lay like a turtle, unharmed. They anxiously scanned the bay on all sides, searching for a mast that might be theirs, but to no avail. Then Jerry straightened up and clapped Sandy on the shoulder.

"Come on," he said. "There's no use standing here moping. The only thing to do now is to take out the dinghy and start to hunt."

They launched the dinghy, put out the stubby oars, and rowed away from the float.

"Where do we look first?" Sandy asked.

"We'll just go the way the wind went," Jerry said. "Luckily, the storm came from the mainland and blew out to sea. That means there's a good chance that the boat didn't pile up on the shore. Of course, there are a lot of islands out there, and plenty of rocks, but there's a lot more open water. With any luck we'll find her floating safe and sound, somewhere out in the bay. I don't think she could have gone too far dragging that anchor."

They headed down the channel, taking occasional side excursions around some of the small islands whenever they saw, on the other side, a mast that could be theirs. But none of the boats they found was the right one. The hot sun made rowing even the light cockleshell of the dinghy unpleasant work. Sandy paused at the oars and pushed back his cowlick, then wiped his perspiring brow. He was beginning to fear that he would never again see his trim new sloop—unless he was to see it lying shattered on one of these rocky islands. Then, with dogged determination, he picked up his oars once more and bent his back to the task of rowing.

Once or twice they asked passing sailors if they had seen an unattended sloop out of the mooring areas, but though everyone offered sympathy and promised to help if they happened to see it, none had any information to offer.

The morning wore on slowly as Sandy and Jerry pulled farther and farther away from the mainland, exploring every possible hiding place the bay had to offer.

By noon, Sandy's spirits were at low ebb, and he was beginning to wonder how he would tell his Uncle Russ the bad news. Then, almost tipping the unsteady dinghy, Jerry half rose from his seat and pointed. "Look!" he shouted. "Over there! I think that's her! And will you look at where she drifted to!"

Sandy dropped the oars and turned to look at the small white sloop with the green decks that lay quietly bobbing at anchor just outside the entrance of the cove where, yesterday, they had been welcomed by a gun!

"Of all places to drift to," he gasped. "It's a darn good thing she didn't drift inside his cove, or she might be shot full of holes by now!"

Then, with a lighter heart than he had felt all morning, Sandy picked up the oars and sent the

dinghy fairly flying to the side of the trim sloop.

"From now on," he said, "sleeping bags and air mattresses or not, we're sleeping on board until we get a permanent mooring for this boat near home!" Relieved and happy, Sandy climbed on board as Jerry tied the dinghy to the stern.

"I'll go below to get the sails out," Sandy said, "while you unship the boom and get the rigging ready."

He opened the hatch cover and slid back the doors, then stepped down into the little cabin. As he started forward to the sail lockers, he had a sudden, odd feeling that something was wrong, something out of place; a strange notion that he had seen, out of the corner of his eye, something that was not what it should have been.

Pausing to look around, he saw what had bothered him. Clamped to the bulkhead over the port bunk was a large, oddly shaped brass pistol, like the kind he had always imagined the old-time pirates carried. He had never seen anything like it before—and he was almost positive that it had not been there yesterday!

"Jerry!" he called, sticking his head out of the hatch. "Come here! I want you to see something and tell me what you think." As Jerry poked his

head into the cabin, Sandy gestured at the brass pistol. "Was that thing here yesterday, or have we gotten into somebody else's boat?"

Jerry brought his dark brows together in a frown and scratched his crew-cut head. "I don't think it was here. I probably would have noticed it. But maybe we just didn't see it. We were so busy with other things."

"But why would Uncle Russ have left a pistol on board?" Sandy asked, puzzled.

"He probably wouldn't have," Jerry said. "But he might have left one of these. That's a flare gun, not a regular pistol at all. You use it as a signal of distress. It shoots a rocket. Still . . . I don't remember seeing it. And I know that your uncle didn't mention leaving one."

"Well, I don't know whether he did or not," Sandy said, "but we'd better make sure this is our boat before we go sailing it off. If it belongs to that guy on the island, we could get into some pretty bad trouble if we took it by mistake!"

As they looked for some identifying marks, an idea suddenly occurred to Sandy. "Maybe this isn't our boat, but one just like it, and maybe the man with the gun was expecting it with somebody else on board! That might explain his actions!"

"That makes sense," Jerry said. "And in that

case, we'd better find out fast if it's ours. Look—our boat didn't have any name on it, and most boats do. If this has a name, we'll know." He hurried to the stern to see, and then to the bow, where some boat owners fasten name plates, but none was to be seen.

"That doesn't prove anything, though," Sandy said. "But I have an idea. Let's look in the food locker. I remember pretty well what was in there yesterday, and I doubt if two boats would have the identical food supplies. One look should tell us." He reached above the galley stove and slid back the doors of the locker, then stepped backward as if he had been hit.

"It's sure not our boat," Sandy said in hushed tones, for in the locker there was no food at all. Instead, where food should have been, was what appeared to be a fortune in fresh, green money!

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Million Dollars' Worth of Trouble

SANDY AND JERRY, stunned for the moment, stood in silence, gazing at the neatly wrapped stacks of tens, twenties, fifties, hundreds and five-hundred-dollar bills—more money than either of them had ever dreamed of!

"I don't know whose boat this is," Sandy said, "but whoever he is, he can sure afford a larger one!"

Awed by the sight of the money, Jerry reached out and slipped a five-hundred-dollar bill from its wrapper. "I just want to look at it for a minute," he said. "I've never seen a five-hundred before!"

Sandy joined him to look at the crisp bill.

"Neither have I," he said. Then, stooping to look closer, he took the bill from Jerry's hand and examined it with the most intense interest.

"Jerry!" he said, almost in a whisper. "I think we've found more than a stack of money in a peculiar place! I may be mistaken, but I think this thing is counterfeit!"

"Counterfeit!" Jerry said, with a gasp. "How can you tell, if you never saw a five-hundred-dollar bill before?"

"Come on over into the sunlight where we can see better," Sandy replied, "and I'll show you what I mean." They moved to the rear of the little cabin, where the sun poured in through the open hatchway cover. Sandy held the money up to the light.

"Look at the corners," he said, pointing to the lower right-hand corner of the bill. "You see all those fine hair lines that make the looping, criss-cross pattern you see on all paper money? Well, I read once that those loops and swirls are the hardest part of a bill to counterfeit, and if you're on the lookout for phony money you should always look there first. Ones or one-thousands, they're all very complicated to engrave. On a genuine bill the lines are sharp and clear. On a counterfeit, they're usually a little fuzzy, especially where two lines

cross. Look over here, right next to the five-hundred-dollar mark, for instance."

He pointed to where a complicated series of fine lines that came together had made a small smear, instead of a sharp, well-defined pattern.

"You'd never find sloppy work like that on a genuine government bill," Sandy said, pointing to this and to another telltale spot his sharp eyes had uncovered.

"I see what you mean," Jerry said. "Boy, there must be more than a million dollars' worth of this useless stuff in that food locker!"

"It's not so useless to someone," Sandy returned. "Whoever made this stuff and is responsible for it is sure making real money out of it in the end—and an awful lot of real money, too!"

Jerry nodded thoughtfully, then said, "Where do you suppose it's coming from?"

"That shouldn't be too hard to figure out," Sandy answered. "That man on the island was pretty nervous about having any unexpected guests, I'd say. I'll bet you this whole stack of money that he's behind the whole thing, and that this is his boat that we're on!"

"You must be right," Jerry said. "From the way that he came racing down that path with his gun yesterday, he must have been watching us all

along, yet he didn't come to stop us until we had dropped our anchor, lowered our sails, and were halfway in to shore in the dinghy! We should have realized when he didn't stop us sooner what that meant. It meant that something funny was going on here!"

"That's right!" Sandy agreed. "He must have been expecting somebody else to come along in this boat—the same class and colors as ours—and he thought that we were whoever he was expecting—until he saw us in the dinghy! That's why he was acting so confused and excited that he didn't know whether to shoot at us, or to be nice and let us get our water and be on our way. We really caught him off guard!"

"Right," Jerry said. "And now we've confused the boats the same way he did, and we've caught him off guard again!"

Sandy sat looking silently at the counterfeit five-hundred-dollar bill, frowning. Then he looked up at his friend and said, "The question now is, what are we going to do about it? We're pretty lucky that we weren't seen coming on board this boat, but do you think our luck is going to last? I'm worried that we won't be able to get away from here again without being seen."

"We haven't got much choice in the matter,

have we?" Jerry answered. "The longer we stay here, the worse our chances will be. There's no telling when the man with the gun or somebody else will come out here to do something with this money, and if they find us here . . ."

"I'd sure hate to cross that fellow," Sandy agreed. "I don't like the way he handles that rifle of his. He looks too darn ready to use it!"

Stuffing the counterfeit five-hundred-dollar bill into his pocket, Sandy stood up. "We'd better get going now, while we still have a chance," he said. "The only thing to do now is to get this bill to the police as evidence of what we've found, and to put them on to this island."

Sandy started up from the cabin but, as his head emerged from the hatchway, he stopped dead in his tracks, for floating in a dinghy just a few feet away was the mysterious owner of the island accompanied by two tough-looking sailors! Sandy looked in dismay from their three faces to the muzzles of three guns pointed directly at him!

It was not a pleasant smile that the man from the island gave him as he said, "Well! This is quite a surprise for all of us, isn't it? Are you still looking for water? Or do you have a better story to entertain me with today?"

CHAPTER EIGHT

Double Blackout

SANDY TRIED HIS HARDEST to look unknowing and innocent, and at the same time shocked and outraged. With the three guns aimed at him, it was not an easy job.

"What's the idea?" he exclaimed. "I've never seen anybody so ready with a gun as you are! We were only looking for our boat. You know it looks the same as yours. We thought for a while that this was it, but . . ."

"But you found out, after some thorough snooping, that it wasn't, didn't you?" the man sneered. "Of course you did. It's my boat, all right! And you're trespassing on it! And this is my island too, and you were trespassing there yesterday!

And if I were to shoot you, I would be perfectly within my rights as a landowner!"

Sandy tried with difficulty to smile reassuringly. "Take it easy, mister," he said. "Honestly, we were just looking for our boat. It dragged anchor in the storm last night, and when we saw yours we made a natural mistake and thought it was ours. Okay, it isn't. We made a mistake, that's all. Now if you'll just let us apologize, we'll get off your private property and go looking again."

But the man didn't show the slightest intention of even moving his rifle from the ready, much less of letting the boys go.

"Of course you'll go looking again," he said. "Looking for what you were looking for yesterday and today. Oh, no! I hardly think I can let you go!" Then he smiled his peculiar smile again. "What's more," he added, "even if I were to let you go, I would first have to ask you to return the money you stole—the money I see sticking out of your pocket!"

Sandy's heart sank. There was nothing he could think of to say now, and he could see no way out of the situation. He sank wearily to a seat in the cockpit and sighed.

"I guess we can both stop play-acting about this trespassing thing," he said. He pulled the telltale

bill out of his pocket and threw it on the deck. "This is what you've been so upset about all along, isn't it?"

"You're a very bright boy," the man with the gun said. "Far too bright, I'm afraid. You have this whole thing figured out already, haven't you?"

"Most of it," Sandy admitted. "At least the parts that count. You're using this island to make counterfeit money, and you're using this sailboat to take it somewhere. That's about all I know, but it's enough to get you in trouble, isn't it, Mr.—?"

"Jones is the name," the man said. "Yes, I would say it was quite enough. The only mistake you've made is your conclusion. What you know is enough to get *you* in trouble—not me. In fact, I should hate to be in as much trouble as you two boys are in right now!" Jones put down his rifle for a moment and said, "Do you mind if I come on board my boat so that we can discuss your difficulties in more comfort?"

Jones stepped out of the dinghy to the deck of the little sloop and settled himself comfortably in the stern seat while his two silent crewmen kept Sandy covered. When he was set, with his ever-present rifle held at ready across his knees, he was followed on board by the larger and meaner look-

ing of the two sailors, who stationed himself beside Jones.

"Oh, yes," Jones repeated, "I should say that what you know is quite enough! And, since you already have too much information to ever let you leave here with, I'll be happy to satisfy your immense curiosity by giving you a little more. But why not have your friend join us on deck?"

When Jerry had come up from the cabin and was sitting beside Sandy, Jones cleared his throat, as if he were about to give a formal speech.

"As far as you went in your thinking, you are most certainly right," he said. "I use this boat to transport counterfeit money which I make on my island. I take it to a waiting freighter that meets me five miles off shore—well beyond the legal jurisdiction of the United States government, in international waters. The freighter takes my pretty counterfeit money and disposes of it in foreign markets, where I get a good price for it, and where not every bright and nosy boy is out to make a nuisance of himself."

Then, once again, Jones smiled his peculiar and unpleasant smile. "I find the foreign markets most useful for disposing of items which are too difficult to get rid of here. I expect that you will not be much harder to dispose of than this money,

when you are beyond the limits of U.S. waters!"

Sandy looked at Jerry in silence, desperately hoping his friend would come up with some flash of inspiration—some idea—which would help them to get out of this situation. But Jerry was no help. For that matter, Sandy reflected, he was not much help himself. But as long as he kept "Jones" talking, he'd get some more information and meanwhile, perhaps, he or Jerry might think of something.

"There's only one thing that has me puzzled in all this," Sandy said therefore. "Why did you leave this boat full of money floating around outside of the cove?"

Jones laughed. "There you have the full essence of our little comedy of errors," he said. "Last night's storm probably tore more than one hundred boats loose from their anchorages and moorings. Yours, I assure you, wasn't the only one that drifted a good distance, and neither was mine!"

"Yours?" Jerry gasped. "You mean that our boat *did* drift over this way? And that you—?"

"I think you understand," Jones replied. "But it wasn't I. It was these stupid fools who work for me. They had loaded the money on board the boat last night before the storm. Then, when it

blew up, we knew that it was impossible to sail to the freighter until the storm had passed. They failed to take the money out of the boat for the night, trusting to luck that nothing would go wrong. But something did go wrong! My boat broke loose and floated out around the point to where it is now. Your boat drifted up to the entrance of my cove. When they came out this morning, my assistants saw your boat, and did not see mine."

Jones laughed a short, sharp laugh. "They actually sailed your sloop five miles out to the freighter! Of course they discovered their mistake when they opened the money locker and found it full of canned food!"

He looked at the sailors with disgust, then continued. "When they realized their error, they promptly sailed back here, but by that time you had found my boat and assumed it to be yours. When they told me their story, I guessed at once what had happened and went to correct the mistake before you found out about our little business. If you had only come a half hour later, you would have found your own boat and sailed it off in perfect safety. Unfortunately for you, you were just a little too soon."

"As long as you're telling us the whole story,"

Jerry said, "will you answer a question for me? I don't understand why you bother with sailboats, when a power boat could do the job so much faster."

"That's a fair question," Jones said. "You *are* smart boys, aren't you? Well, I pride myself on using my brains, too. I use this innocent-looking sloop for several reasons, one of which caused this whole ridiculous mix-up. For one thing, an individual member of a popular class of sailboat is very hard for the casual observer to identify. This we have both seen to be true. For another thing, everyone thinks of a sailboat as being merely a pleasure craft, and would never suspect it of anything illegal. It can go in and out of the harbor on a regular schedule and nobody will notice it or even realize it's the same boat they are seeing. Third, all power boats have to be registered and licensed by the Coast Guard, while a sailboat is so anonymous that it doesn't even have to have a name. Fourth, it gives me a reason to live on this island. To the people who stop to think of me, if they think of me at all, I am a retired gentleman whose principal hobby is sailing, and who lives on an island in order to get the most enjoyment out of the sport."

Again Jones smiled, and Sandy shivered. "It's

quite a neat setup, don't you agree?" Jones said. "And, with the same neatness that is a part of my way of life, I am now going to put an end to this whole unpleasant interruption."

Suddenly dropping his lazy conversational manner, Jones sat upright and pointed his rifle at Sandy. Not moving his eyes from the boys, he spoke to the sailor who was still standing silent by his side. "We'll have to take them out to the freighter now. There's nothing else to do. I'll decide what to do with them later on. You and Turk sail this boat and I'll follow in theirs. Lock them below," he added, nodding toward Sandy and Jerry.

For the first time since they had seen him, the sailor spoke. "Okay," he said. "We won't mess it up this time." Then, this being apparently the longest speech of which he was capable, he shut his mouth into a thin, hard line, and moved heavily to the boys.

Using his pistol as a goad, he poked Sandy in the ribs and motioned him to go below. As Sandy started to take his first step down into the cabin, the sailor shoved him roughly and sent him sprawling onto the deck below. His head spinning, Sandy looked up to see the giant sailor towering above him. He was conscious of an odd noise, like

a strangled, slow sobbing, far away. What was it? He had never heard such an ugly sound in his life. . . .

Then, as his head cleared, he realized what it was that he was hearing. The sailor was laughing!

Afterward, Sandy was unable to explain why the strange laughing sound, and the sight of the warped expression that only faintly resembled a smile, should have made him behave as he did. An uncontrollable fury filled him and he jumped to his feet with a headlong rush!

Caught off guard by Sandy's sudden attack, the sailor made a clumsy move to sidestep, but not before Sandy's swing had caught him a terrific blow in the ribs. All of Sandy's six feet of wiry muscle went into the blow, and the sailor reeled back, staggering.

Sandy followed him into the cockpit to take advantage of the surprise attack, just in time to see Jones bring down the barrel of his rifle sharply on Jerry's head. Sandy whirled to face Jones as Jerry dropped to the deck.

He started forward, cocking his fist to lash out before Jones could raise his rifle again, but suddenly, with a sound like a bat striking a ball, a blinding light seemed to explode in his face. This first sensation was followed by a dull roaring

sound and a spreading pool of inky blackness. He felt his knees buckle. . . .

Somewhere, from afar, he heard Jones speaking in bored tones.

"Bull," he was saying, almost lazily, "you know how I dislike unnecessary violence in any form. If you hadn't shoved the boy, this little scene would never—"

And that was the last Sandy was to hear for quite a while.

CHAPTER NINE

To the Freighter

WHEN SANDY CAME TO, the first thing he was aware of was a terrific headache. This was accompanied by such severe dizziness that when he tried to sit up he sank back immediately, holding his head. Gingerly, he ran his hand over his skull as if to make sure that it was still all in one piece. Then he lay still for a while, afraid to try moving anything else, and looked at the ceiling above him.

Slowly, the dizziness ebbed away and the pain lurking behind his eyes settled down to a more bearable level. When he felt it was safe to try, he moved more cautiously than the first time, sat up and swung his long legs over the edge of the bunk.

For a moment, he simply sat there with his

elbows on his knees and his head propped in his hands, and looked at the decking. He had to think hard, as if he were remembering a dream that was fast fading away. Why was he in this bunk below? How was Jerry handling the boat alone? He frowned, pushed back his cowlick and raised his head.

As he did so, he caught sight of the brass flare gun clipped to its bracket on the opposite bulkhead, and suddenly he remembered everything that had happened. Of course! This was not his boat at all, and Jerry wasn't sailing it alone—or in any other way, for that matter!

Jerry lay on the opposite bunk below the flare gun, propped up on one elbow and looking at him with a grin.

"I guess it isn't funny," he said, "but you sure took an awful long time to wake up and figure out what had happened to you! I've been lying here awake for five minutes now, just watching you come up from under!" Ruefully rubbing a hand across his black crew-cut, he added, "I guess I must have taken the same length of time doing it when I woke up, but there wasn't anybody here to time me!"

"I saw Jones hit you," Sandy said, "and he sure

wasn't making any special effort to be gentle. I guess that Bull, the big sailor, got me from behind when I turned to go after Jones."

Still rubbing his head, Jerry sat up in his bunk and faced his friend. "Sandy," he asked, "what made you take a swing at Bull like that? You sure must have known that the two of us didn't stand much of a chance in a fight against three men with guns!"

"I don't suppose I was really thinking at all," Sandy answered. "I know it was a pretty foolish thing to do, but there was just something about Bull's laugh . . . Anyway, I'm sorry. It could have got us killed right then and there, I guess. As it is, I think we're lucky to have got away with nothing more than a couple of headaches."

"What do you mean, a couple?" Jerry said. "I've got two myself!"

Both boys laughed, but as their laughter died down, they became more serious than they had been before.

"Look, we can sit here and make jokes about the situation until they get us out to that freighter," Sandy said, "but that isn't going to help us to figure out a way to escape and get to the police."

"You're perfectly right," Jerry agreed. "We'd better scout around and size things up while we've got a chance."

"And we'd better do it fast," Sandy added. "We don't know how long we've been knocked out, so we haven't any idea how much time we have left before we arrive at the freighter. And by then, it might very well be too late to do anything for ourselves at all."

Half rising from their bunks, for the cabin roof was too low to allow them full standing headroom, they moved aft to the sliding doors that separated them from the cockpit. Gently testing the doors, Sandy found that they were locked, as he had assumed they would be. A crack of light showed where the two halves of the door met, and he placed his eye to it. With a frown, he turned around to look at Jerry.

"Boy, they're not taking any chances this time," he whispered. "Both of the sailors are out there in the cockpit, and the one called Turk has his pistol in his hand, and it's pointed right at this door!"

Moving back to the bunks, Sandy and Jerry knelt to look through the small windows above them. On both sides of the sloop, there was nothing to see but water—not so much as a buoy

or another boat in sight. Far off to the starboard side, they made out a low smudge that was the shore.

"We must be almost there!" Sandy said.

"Do you think there's any use trying the forward hatch?" asked Jerry. "Or do you suppose that they have that one locked tight, too?"

"I don't know if it matters much one way or the other," Sandy sighed. "Even if it is open, I wouldn't care to stick my head out—not with Turk sitting back there with his pistol ready! I think I've had enough of rushing into pistols for one day!" Putting his hand to his head, he felt the lump that was forming above his right ear.

Moving with the most extreme caution, so as to attract no attention from their guards, they started to explore the cabin for whatever possibilities it had to offer. Coming to the two tiny forward portholes, barely large enough to put a hand through, Sandy paused to take a look forward.

Before their bow, perhaps fifty yards away, was a boat sailing calmly along as if the whole world were on a holiday. For one short instant, Sandy thought that this might be their chance—perhaps a signal with the flare gun might bring aid from the passing sailor! But his hopes were shattered in

no time as he realized that the sloop sailing ahead was his own, sailed by Jones who was leading the way to the freighter that waited, like doom, not far off.

Even in his hopelessness, Sandy could not help pausing to admire his boat, graceful and trim, making good time beating into a steady breeze. He thought for a moment of the preceding day when he had learned to take the tiller and had first felt the happy pride of ownership and accomplishment that comes to every boat owner. What a change in fortunes this new day had brought! Now his boat was no longer his and, instead of carrying him to pleasure, was leading him to what looked like certain disaster!

As he watched, his boat suddenly put about on a new tack. He saw Jones skillfully handling both the tiller and the sheets. The jib was swiftly brought over to fill and, together with the mainsail, was trimmed and drawing in no time. Whatever else you could say about Jones, Sandy thought, the man sure knew how to handle a boat!

The new tack set by Jones was followed by their sailor-guards. With a creak of tackle and rigging and a shifting of weight to the opposite side, the little sloop came about. Still at his lookout post at the forward port, Sandy saw the head of the boat

swing about. As it did so, he caught sight of their destination.

"Jerry! Look!" he whispered, motioning his friend to join him at the other porthole. There, high in the water, perhaps a mile away, was the dark shape of the freighter. Wisps of gray-white smoke curled from its stack and drifted off in the breeze. It was an ordinary-looking freight cargo ship, such as you would see in any port of the world. It had a black hull, a white deckhouse and a black stack marked with green stripes. All perfectly ordinary, perhaps, but to Sandy and Jerry it looked sinister and piratical. They stared at it for a few minutes, trying to judge their rate of progress from the lessening distance between themselves and the black-hulled ship. Then Sandy tore himself away from the porthole and grabbed Jerry's arm.

"Jerry, we've got to start acting fast," he said. "There's hardly any time left!"

"Act how?" Jerry said. "What can we do but sit here and wait like a couple of chickens in a crate being taken to market? If you can think of anything to do, I'm game, but I haven't got an idea in my head."

"I don't think there's anything we can do about the situation now," Sandy said, "but I have an idea

that might work later on. It may not be worth much, but anything's worth trying." He cast his eyes about the small cabin.

"Did you by any chance come across a first-aid kit while you were searching?" he asked.

"Yes, I did," Jerry answered. "It's in that locker next to the money. But what do you want it for?"

"Bring it over and I'll show you," Sandy answered.

While Jerry went for the first-aid kit, Sandy took the brass flare pistol from its bracket above the bunk. Then he sat down on the bunk and rolled up his pants leg. "Here," he said. "Give me some tape. I'm going to strap this bulky thing to my leg if we have enough."

"What for?" Jerry asked in surprise. "It's not a real gun, you know. All it does is fire a flare. Besides, there's only one flare in here, and I don't know if that can do us very much good."

"I don't care about the flares," Sandy answered. "It's the gun itself that I'm interested in. It fooled me when I saw it and it just might possibly fool someone else who might not be familiar with these things. I'm hoping that if we get a chance to pull it on someone after dark, we can fool him long enough to get hold of a real gun that will help us escape!"

"That's not a bad idea," Jerry admitted. "That is, if we're still alive by dark!"

"That's about all I'm hoping for now," Sandy answered. "I don't know whether we can do any good with this flare gun or not, but it's pretty clear that we can't escape from *this* boat. So I'm doing what I can to let us be able to take advantage of any chance we get on board the freighter. If we're lucky enough to *get* a chance."

As he spoke, Sandy was fastening the bulky flare pistol to the inside of his calf, making it as secure as he could with the tape from the first-aid kit. Finished at last, he stood up as well as he could in the low-ceilinged cabin, and tried to walk around.

"Does it show too much?" he asked Jerry, shaking his leg a little.

"It shows," Jerry said, without much encouragement. "But maybe if you move around carefully, and if they don't take a sudden interest in your legs, you might get away with it. Anyway, what can we lose by trying?"

Sandy looked down at the bulge which so obviously distorted the leg of his blue jeans. He was afraid that he would never get away with it. He remembered the bell-bottom pants that the Navy enlisted men wear and that all sailors once wore,

and he wondered if their original purpose had been to carry concealed weapons. Whatever they were for, he sure wished he were wearing a pair now!

"I guess this is about as good as we can get it," Sandy said. "If one of us only had a jacket on, we could probably hide the gun under an arm, but these sweat shirts just don't leave enough room."

"No, I think the leg is a better place anyway," Jerry said. "If they search us for weapons, they're apt to miss your leg, but they'd never miss patting you under the arm. Anyway, we don't have a jacket, and as far as I can see there's no place else to hide the thing."

The boys took a last look around the cabin to see if there was anything else to help them, but there was not even a small kitchen knife or a can opener in the little galley. It seemed that Mr. Jones kept only counterfeit money in that area. As they were carefully exploring every possible nook and cranny in the cabin, they felt the sloop heel to the other side as it once more came about to go on a new tack.

From the vantage point of the two forward ports they saw the reason for this latest maneuver. They were coming up to the wind alongside the freighter, preparing to stop. The high sides of the

big ship loomed above them like the walls of a fortress, but chipped and scarred with streaks of rust. As the sloop swung completely into the wind, losing headway, they caught sight of Jones making a line fast to the bow of Sandy's boat. Then, with a rattle of slides and a clumping of heavy steps on the cabin roof overhead, the counterfeiters' craft came to a halt and was made fast alongside the freighter.

Whatever was to happen, it would happen now!

CHAPTER TEN

Aboard the Floating Prison

MOVING AWAY from the forward portholes, Sandy and Jerry sat on the edges of the bunks and waited for their captors to come and get them. Both boys made themselves look as if they were completely dejected—as if they had already given up any hopes they might have had of escaping or of being rescued.

In a few minutes the footsteps on the deck and cabin top stopped and the little craft lay bobbing and wallowing in the sea swell that rose and fell alongside the freighter.

Rope bumpers, large braided lengths of thick cordage, were lashed to the sides of the sloop to

keep it from being damaged by rubbing and banging against the steel side of the big ship.

Although they were listening as closely as possible to everything that went on, they could not make out the words they heard shouted from the freighter's deck far above. Nevertheless, the sense of them was made clear by the answer that Turk bellowed back.

"Yeah! we got the stuff this time, all right! And we got a couple of other pieces of cargo with us, too! Wait and we'll show you!"

This was the moment, Sandy thought. He would have to be careful, he warned himself, not to lose his temper as he had done last time, even if he was roughed up and shoved around again. And above all, he must be careful about the way he moved. One false step would surely outline the telltale shape of the flare gun taped to his leg—and that would be the end of the only "weapon" that he and Jerry had! Not only that, but it might well be the end of the only chance they would have to get away with whole skins!

A bolt grated in its slide on the companionway door and the hatch slid open to reveal Turk, pistol in hand, grinning nastily at them.

"Okay, gents," he said. "The first-class passage

on the local ferry is over. Just step up on deck, and we'll transfer to the next vessel."

As Sandy reached the companionway steps, Turk reached down and grabbed him by the neck of his shirt. With a swift heave, he sent Sandy sprawling on the cockpit deck. Keeping a tight control on his temper, Sandy confined his thoughts to worrying about getting his leg tucked under him in such a position that the flare pistol wouldn't show.

But he need not have worried, for Turk was too busy enjoying himself giving the same treatment to Jerry, who came flying out of the cabin to land heavily on the deck alongside Sandy.

"These boys sure play a lot of rough games," he murmured. "And I'm afraid that this is only the beginning of a whole world's series!"

"Take it easy," Sandy whispered to his friend. "Let's just go along with them quietly. Maybe we can keep in one piece until we have a chance to figure a way out."

At Turk's orders, they rose to their feet. Looking up to the freighter's deck high above them, they saw the other sailor, Bull, already on board, at the top of a long rope ladder. He too had his pistol held ready, and the expression on his face gave every indication that he would be only too

glad to use it if he were given even half an excuse to do so.

"Get up that ladder," Turk ordered, "and don't try nothing funny. We'll have you covered all the way." He waved his pistol at Jerry to indicate that he wanted him to go up the ladder first.

Sandy's heart seemed to sink in his chest. The order of climbing was all wrong—it couldn't be wronger! Jerry first, himself next, and Turk last! Surely Turk, if he was below him looking up as he climbed, couldn't fail to notice the flare pistol taped to Sandy's leg!

Acting as if he misunderstood Turk's wordless command, Sandy stepped forward and grabbed the rope ladder, but the sailor's big hand gripped him by the shoulder hard and firmly pulled him back.

"You sure are eager, ain't ya, kid? And you're tricky, too. Now why did you want to go up that ladder first? That ain't no picnic or party up there!" He screwed his big face into a frown of deep thought. Apparently unable to reach a decision, he undid his thinking expression and snarled at Sandy. "Just stop thinkin' up tricks, see! You let me do the thinkin' here! Now, you go on first, the way I told ya!" He pushed Jerry toward the ladder.

Resigned to having his flare gun discovered, and almost resigned to whatever would happen next, Sandy moved to the ladder to take his turn, when once more the big hand of Turk pulled him back. "I told you I'd do the thinkin'!" Turk said. "I don't know what you got up your sleeve, but whatever it is, you'd better forget it. I'm goin' up next!"

At last, here was a turn of luck! Sandy could hardly keep from grinning as Turk started to mount the rope ladder. The big sailor swung up easily, keeping his eyes always turned downward to Sandy. Halfway up, he stopped.

"Come on, now," he said. "You won't be able to play no tricks this way. You're too far back for any leg grabbing, and I got this gun aimed right at the top of your head. Now come on up, and come slow!"

Sandy stepped from the deck of the sloop to the lower rungs of the rope ladder and did as he was told, moving his "gun leg" as carefully as he could without running the risk of attracting any attention to it. At least, he thought with some satisfaction, he had gotten over the first hurdle!

On the deck of the freighter, the boys were met by Jones, Bull, and a mean-looking crew of some

of the dirtiest men they had ever seen. The freighter itself was none too clean, with paint scaling from the decks and splotches of grease covering the cargo-handling winches and other deck machinery. The white deckhouse, seen from close quarters, was a dingy and spotted gray, and the portholes were streaked with dirt and dried salt.

In the midst of a rat's nest of coiled ropes, fraying cables and other ship's debris, Jones sat on an overturned crate as if it were an easy chair. He seemed perfectly at ease and completely out of place at the same time, his smart sports clothes and yachting cap making an odd contrast to the mixed clothing of the freighter's crew.

Despite his air of being a gentleman of leisure, Jones had his rifle still with him, lying across his knees, and his long fingers played restlessly with the safety catch and the trigger.

"Gentlemen," he smiled. "Welcome aboard. I hope you will find our modest accommodations suitable for your long journey. The Captain will arrive in a moment, and I am sure that he will do whatever is in his power to see to it that you are treated—appropriately." Still smiling, he turned to Bull and said, "Bull, see to it that our pas-

sengers aren't carrying any unnecessary luggage."

Bull looked puzzled. "I don't getcha," he mumbled.

Jones rose with a swift movement, his smile turned at once to ice. "If you weren't such a stupid lout, perhaps you'd get me the first time I speak to you! If you weren't such a stupid lout, we wouldn't have had these boys here with us in the first place."

He moved forward as if to strike the cowering Bull, but stopped and regained control over himself. Once more, he put on his bland smile.

"Pardon my temper and my little jokes, Bull," he said. "What I meant by 'unnecessary luggage' was concealed weapons. In other words, frisk them."

Bull shook his head and said, "Why'ntcha say so inna first place?" and started toward Jerry and Sandy.

Once again Sandy tensed. If only his luck would hold and he could get through without having Bull find the flare gun! Otherwise . . .

He watched as Bull patted Jerry, none too gently. He realized that, if Jerry had been wearing a jacket under which to hide the flare gun, it would surely have been discovered. Soon Bull was

finished with Jerry, and it was Sandy's turn. Bull frisked him quickly and clumsily, patting his chest and under his arms, even though it was obvious that he couldn't possibly have hidden anything there. Bull's big hands continued down to Sandy's pockets, hesitated for a moment, and stopped right there. He turned to face Jones.

"They're clean," he said.

Jones nodded, not paying too much attention to Bull or to the search. "I didn't think that they would have had the foresight to bring any weapons. Still—there's no sense taking any chances. In this business, one can't be too careful."

Noticing that Jones was not looking directly at either Bull or themselves as he said all this, Sandy followed his gaze to the upper decks of the freighter, wondering what he *was* looking for. A door swung open and a man stepped out into the late afternoon sunshine. Jones rose, waved to the man and called, "Captain! Come down! We have a little surprise for you!"

Sandy had not known what to expect of the captain of such a ship as this, but surely, the man who came down the ladder did not look in the least like anything he might have imagined! He would not have been really surprised by a bearded

giant, or another tough, such as one of the crew, or even, perhaps, by a turbaned oriental—but this captain was surely a complete surprise!

He was a thin, wispy-looking old man—how old, Sandy could not begin to guess—with a face like a wise preacher's or perhaps a college professor's. He was dressed entirely in white, down to his old-fashioned white high-buttoned shoes, and he carried a bamboo cane with a gold head. To finish off this spotless outfit, so out of keeping with his ship, the Captain wore a pith helmet, such as British officers wear in the tropics!

The old man moved briskly down the steep ladder from the upper decks and, with scarcely a glance at the boys, addressed himself to Jones.

"Who are these children?" he asked, his voice thin and reedy, but carrying authority and as sharp as the crack of a whip.

As Jones explained the presence of the boys on board the freighter, the Captain looked from them to Jones and back again. When Jones told him how Bull and Turk had mistaken Sandy's sloop for his own, the Captain shifted his gaze to the two sailors, who almost winced under his cutting stare of scorn. Then, when the tale was done, he devoted his attention exclusively to Jones once more.

"What do you want to do about it?" he asked.

"I leave that entirely up to you," Jones said. "I want no part of any violence—if it can be avoided. Besides, you will have them on your hands, and I'll be ashore, so that it's hardly my place to dictate the conditions of their—er—disposal."

Jones rose, leaning casually on his rifle as if it were a walking stick. "Whatever you want to do is all right with me. Just get rid of them, that's all. And do it in a way that won't attract any suspicions ashore. I don't want anyone poking around the island asking questions about them."

The Captain thought for a minute, then answered, "I don't think we'll have anyone poking around the island. Not if we handle this thing right. They must not, you see, simply disappear. If they just drop out of sight without a trace, it will surely bring on a search, and someone may have seen them near your place. No, that won't do. On the contrary, they must be found. But they must be found in such a condition that they can answer no questions—ever. And it must look natural."

"Perfect logic," Jones said. "I agree completely. But how are you going to manage it?"

"We will keep them aboard," the Captain answered, "locked up below. I will tow their sloop after us. When we are a satisfactory distance

from shore—say a thousand miles—we will put them into their boat and cut them loose."

"But," Jones protested, "isn't there a chance that they could make it in to shore somewhere? Men have managed rougher trips than that in the past."

"Don't worry about details," the Captain said in his quiet, scholarly voice. "I'll take care of everything. First, we will drop them far out of any regular shipping lanes. In addition, we will first wreck their sails, their mast and their rigging as if it had been done by a storm. When they are finally found, it will be too late to do anything about them. It will just look as if a storm had wrecked them and blown them out to sea. It's a tidy way to operate—no messy violence—and there will be no clues to lead to your precious island."

Jones considered for a minute before answering. "It sounds all right to me, if you say so. After all, you know your end of the business better than I do."

"Indeed I do," the Captain answered calmly.

"Now," Jones said briskly, dismissing the matter of the boys from his mind, "we have my other cargo to discuss before our dealings are finished for this trip."

The Captain held up a thin, white hand to stop Jones. "Not now," he said. "Our business can wait until we have refreshed ourselves and had a bit of dinner. Then when it is dark, you can turn over your cargo—if the terms are satisfactory—and sail home unobserved."

He waved his stick at the boys and motioned to two of his crew members. "Take them below and lock them in an empty cabin. And set a close watch on them."

As Sandy and Jerry were led off by the two crewmen, they saw the Captain precede Jones to the foot of the deckhouse ladder. He paused and bowed, indicating that Jones should go first. Somehow, the courtly, old-fashioned gesture seemed to Sandy more sinister than anything else he had seen since the start of this day.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Escape to Danger

STEPPING OVER the high sill of the door that led from the deck to the passageway, Sandy and Jerry were plunged at once into gloom and near-darkness. The throb of the freighter's engines, barely noticeable on deck, became a roar, and the passage was thick with the smells and heat from the engine room below.

They were pushed and shoved along the passage, past a number of doors which Sandy presumed were the crew's quarters. On the other side of the passage, an occasional door opened onto the engine room, a great cavern of heat and noise, brightly illuminated by lights on all sides, and crisscrossed by catwalks and ladders.

Without a word, their guides stopped before a door opposite the main opening to the engine room. One of them produced a large key ring and, after a moment's searching for the right key, unlocked the door.

Motioning them to enter, the guard stood aside as Sandy and Jerry stepped into the gloom of a small cabin. Then the door slammed behind them, the key clicked in the lock, and they were alone. Through the ventilating slits cut in the top and bottom of the door, they heard one of their captors.

"You take the first watch while I go for chow. I'll bring the kids something to eat when I come back, then you can get yours." The other said something in agreement, and the speaker's footsteps in the passageway were soon drowned out in the roar of the engines.

Sinking to a seat on the bare springs of a bunk with no mattress, Jerry looked up at Sandy and asked, "What now?"

"I don't know," Sandy admitted. "But at least we got away with the flare gun, and we may figure out a way to use it." He lowered himself to the bare bunk opposite the one Jerry occupied, and surveyed their floating prison.

The cabin offered very little promise of help.

There were the two double bunks, both bare of mattresses, four lockers, a sink in one corner and a single porthole. Going to the porthole, Sandy tried to open it, but with no success. The "dogs" that secured it, heavy steel latches, were welded in place, and the glass of the porthole looked too heavy to break. Obviously, the place had been used as a prison before. Outside of the porthole, there was nothing but the sea. Even if the glass could be broken, Sandy didn't like the idea of dropping down into the black waters below. That seemed as unpromising a position as the one they were in now!

The lockers were the next subject of their exploration but, as they expected, these proved as empty and bare as the cabin itself. The sink, the only remaining thing in the room, was the source of no inspiration.

Settling himself on the bunk once more, Sandy began to roll up his pants leg. "I guess this flare gun is our only hope at that," he said. "We might as well have it ready."

He quickly undid the adhesive tape, then stuck the gun in his belt. As he did so, an idea came to him.

"Jerry, I think I have it!" he whispered.

The plan was a simple one—almost too simple to work. But it seemed the only chance they had. Sandy proposed to wait until the guard came with their food, then, threatening him with the flare pistol, they would try to overcome him, tie him up, and make their way to the deck. Once there, they would have to find a way out. It seemed a slim hope, but what else could they do?

Jerry agreed, and whispering quietly, they worked out the best positions to take to make their attack good. Meanwhile, one more stroke of good fortune came to them. Jerry found that he still had the roll of adhesive tape in his pocket, undiscovered in Bull's quick inspection. It would come in handy for binding and gagging the guards, if they could once overcome them.

Now there was nothing to do but wait. Through the porthole, they could see the sky growing dark, and the gathering gloom in the cabin raised their spirits. It was one more bit of aid that might fool their jailer into thinking the flare gun was a real weapon. The last glow of day was dying on the horizon when they once more heard voices in the passageway.

Jerry took his position by the door while Sandy readied the flare gun, then sat on one of the bunks.

The door swung open and their guards entered, the lead man carrying a tray and his companion behind him.

As they stepped over the sill, Sandy stood up suddenly, upsetting the tray. Hot coffee spilled over the lead man, who stepped backward with a cry. As he did so, Jerry, from his position behind the door, reached out and knocked the second man to the deck. At the same moment, Sandy raised his flare gun and aimed.

"All right," he said. "I have you covered!"

"Do what he says," one of the sailors said. "Do you see that gun? It's a flare!"

Sandy was startled. If they knew it was not a real pistol, why didn't they charge him? Why were they cowering away? Then he realized for the first time that the flare pistol, used as a weapon, must be an awful thing. Anything that could send a stream of flame hundreds of feet into the air could surely inflict a terrible wound when used against a man. He shuddered, knowing he could never use it in this way. But as long as the sailors didn't know it . . .

It was short work to silence the men with adhesive-tape gags, and to tape their hands firmly behind their backs. When this was done, the boys pushed the sailors into the lockers, taped their

ankles together, and shut them in. The locker doors secured firmly with a latch. Leaving the cabin silently, Sandy and Jerry locked its door behind them. That certainly took care of two of their captors. Now, if the rest would just prove this easy!

As they stepped away from the door, Sandy whispered, "Let's get out of this passage fast. There are too many doors here, and one might pop open at any minute!"

They swiftly moved down the length of the passage until they reached the bulkhead door. Outside, the deck was dark, with the complete blackness of a night at sea, pierced only by the shaft of light that came from the passage. Moving now as quickly as they could, they slipped out onto the deck, and stepped back out of the light. Their shadows had been outlined boldly against the passage light for only a second. They crouched in the darkness and waited to be sure they had not been observed. So far, so good.

Now that they had gotten this far, Sandy realized, their problems were just beginning. How were they to get off the ship? And how could they prevent being followed?

"Jerry," he whispered, "we've got to see to it that we get away from here in the fastest boat

they have! I wonder if there's a power boat around?"

"There has to be," Jerry answered. "Every ship carries lifeboats, and one of them always has power so it can be used as a captain's launch when necessary."

"Well, let's find it!" Sandy whispered.

Gazing over the side, they could see no boat tied up at all. They had to work their way to the other side of the freighter, without once more crossing the telltale path of light from the passageway. To do this, they had to work their way forward to the bow, and then around to the other side of the ship. Slowly, with as much care as they could muster, they dropped to their knees and began to crawl.

They reached the forepeak with no trouble, except the minor difficulties of crawling over the mess of rope and ship's gear scattered around the disordered deck. As they started back, though, two dark forms appeared in the light of the passage!

"Down!" Sandy whispered, and he and Jerry dropped flat on the deck behind the protection of the windlass. Peering around the corner of the huge machine, with its coil of giant anchor chain,

they watched the figures come nearer. Halfway between them and the deckhouse, the shadows stopped, leaning against the bulwark, and lit cigarettes.

In the brief flare of the match, the boys recognized the grim face of Turk. The other man with him was a sailor they had seen on deck with the rest of the crew when they had been taken aboard the freighter. He spoke in a thin, flat, whining voice, with a trace of a foreign accent that might have had its origin in any country in the world, but which by now was simply international. The first words the boys could make out came from Turk.

"This waiting is getting on my nerves," he rumbled. "What's keeping us from shoving off?"

"It's the big businessmen up there," the sailor whined, jerking his thumb toward the Captain's quarters. "Jones wants more for the phony dough than he got last time, and the Skipper wants to give him less. The Skipper says he rates a break in the price for getting rid of those kids for Jones. Jones says he's taking as much risk as the Skipper."

"And how about us?" Turk asked. "Ain't we in this as much as them? Where's the payoff for us?"

"I don't know about you," the sailor answered. "But the Skipper never let *us* down yet. He says he's gotta have better terms so's to pay us a bonus. And we'll get it," he continued, his voice taking on a mean, determined tone. "We'll get it, or else!"

Sandy and Jerry, scarcely daring to breathe, lay still in the shadow of the windlass, listening to this exchange. At each word, the black freighter seemed less and less like a place where they wanted to stay. Something had to be done, and fast! As each moment wore on, Jones and the Captain were coming closer to an agreement, and when that agreement was reached, the ship would sail. And if it sailed with them still aboard, Sandy thought, their chance of escape would slim down almost to the vanishing point!

For a few minutes, Turk and his friend stood silently at the rail and smoked their cigarettes. The stillness of the scene was marked only by the glow of coals against the black sea and sky. Then one of the cigarettes made an arch through the night as it was flipped over the side. The figures straightened.

"I'm going back up there," Turk announced, "and see if I can get any better idea what's going on. I'll listen at the porthole, and you stay back

on the boat deck and cover for me. If anyone comes along, start to whistle."

The two dark figures walked back to the deckhouse and disappeared for a moment in the shadows. A few minutes later, Sandy saw their forms outlined briefly against the light from a porthole on the boat deck; then they passed once more from sight.

Turning to Jerry, Sandy whispered, "We'd better get going! If they wind up that business talk before we're out of here, I don't give us much of a chance!"

Once more, they crept in the shadows, moving with painful care over the tangled equipment that seemed to cover the decks everywhere. At last, reaching the ladder from the main deck to the boat deck, they paused and took stock. Above them, showing only as a dark shape against the dark sky, loomed the bow of the nearest of the freighter's four lifeboats. Slowly, and with the greatest of care, they slipped up the ladder until Sandy's head was at a level with the deck above. He waited and watched to be sure the deck was uninhabited. When he was reasonably certain, he moved ahead, slower now than before, and slid his body up onto the deck. Jerry followed suit, and soon the two, pulling themselves forward on

the deck by the flats of their hands and the toes of their sneakers, were sheltered by a life-jacket box below the lifeboat.

Turning over, Sandy scanned the bottom of the lifeboat, until, with a sigh of relief, he saw what he was hoping to see—the screw of a power boat protruding from the stern. This was the object of their search!

As he pointed excitedly to the screw, Jerry whispered with puzzlement, "Now that we've found their power gig, what are we going to do with it? It takes four men to launch these things, and even if we could launch it, it would make such a noise that we'd have the whole crew on our necks before it ever hit the water!"

"I didn't figure on launching it," Sandy said. "What I want to do is fix it so they won't be able to follow us in it when we make our getaway on the sloop!"

"Smart thinking!" Jerry whispered. "There's very little danger that they can chase us with the freighter itself. In the first place, by the time they could turn it around, we'd be out of sight. And if they don't catch up with us out here, they won't dare come too near the harbor. The water there isn't deep enough for a ship this size and it would be too risky for them. But *I* don't know too much

about engines. How are you going to disable this one?"

"I know a few ways," Sandy answered, "and I'm going to use them all! If I just put one thing out of order, they might fix it right away. But, with the mess I'm going to make of that engine, it'll take them a half hour or better to get it going. And by then, I hope, we'll have sailed out of sight!"

Working with the greatest of care, the boys unlaced the canvas cover on the outboard side of the lifeboat. Standing on the rail of the ship, Sandy swung up and slid in beneath the cover, into a pitch-blackness that made the night outside seem bright in comparison.

As Jerry joined Sandy, his added weight made the lifeboat lurch to one side, and brought a creak from the davits in which the boat was hung. To the boys under the canvas, it sounded as loud as a scream! Motionless in the dark, they waited for the thud of running feet, the tearing back of the boat cover, the glare of flashlights—but none came. The only answer to the noise was a thin, tuneless whistle from the deck above them. It was Turk's fellow sailor, keeping watch for his spying friend, and he was as afraid of passing noises as the boys were!

Not daring to move, Sandy and Jerry waited for what seemed hours until the slight swaying of the lifeboat stopped. As cautiously as they could, so as not to start it moving again, they changed their positions in such a way as to balance the boat better. At last they were stationed one on each side of what Sandy could only hope was the engine compartment.

"How can you work in the dark?" Jerry whispered. "How will you know what's what in there?"

"It shouldn't be too hard," Sandy replied. "Almost all engines have a lot in common. If I can just get my hands on the engine, I think I'll know what to do."

Working only by touch, it was not easy to find out how the lid to the engine compartment was removed. Slowly moving his hands around the surfaces of the box, Sandy found two hook-eyes, which he carefully unfastened. On the opposite side of the box, he found two more, which he also undid.

"We're in luck," he whispered to Jerry. "If this had been a hinged top, I don't think we could have opened it. There isn't enough headroom below this canvas to raise a boxtop this size."

With the greatest of care, making only the smallest of scraping noises, they removed the heavy lid and placed it across two of the lifeboat's seats.

"I'm ready," Sandy said. "I'm going to be handing you some parts, Jerry. I want you to put them in your shirt. We can't leave them in here, and if we threw them overboard, the splash would surely be heard. Just be sure they don't clank around!"

Working noiselessly, Sandy ran his hands over the engine, starting from the top of the block. He touched and counted the spark plugs—four of them. His own experience with assorted jalopies would come in handy here, he thought. Carefully, he slipped the wires off the tops of the spark plugs. Following the wires to their source, he came to the distributor cap. Two clips held it in place. These were easily removed. Following the wire that came from the center of the distributor cap, he came to its end at the spark coil. A small pull removed it. Then he handed the whole thing, which felt like a mechanical octopus, to Jerry, who slipped it into his shirt.

A little more probing brought out two more parts from the distributor, both quite small. One

was the rotor, the other the condenser. "With any one of these things gone," Sandy whispered, "they won't be able to run this boat!"

"Great!" Jerry breathed. "Now let's get going!"

"Not yet," Sandy said. "We still have some more to do. I don't want to make it too easy for them!"

The next thing to go was the fuel pump, as Sandy unscrewed from it the glass bowl through which the gasoline had to pass. This was followed by a small collection of springs from the choke, the accelerator and the carburetor.

"I think that ought to do it," Sandy said. "Now let's put this engine lid back on, so they can't tell right away that somebody's been in here!"

It took even more care to replace the lid than it had to take it off. It was a tight fit, and really needed a blow on the top to make it fit properly on the casing, but this could not be done without making far too much noise. Finally, they decided to leave it unhooked, rather than run the risk of giving away their presence in the lifeboat.

Getting out and dropping soundlessly to the deck was not easy either, especially for Jerry, with the hardware stored in his bulging shirt front. Sandy, who had gone first, helped him down, and Jerry landed beside him with a muted clinking of

metal and hard plastic. The slight noise brought no warning whistle from Turk's lookout.

A glance at the deck below showed them why. Their eyes, grown accustomed to complete darkness, were now able to see quite clearly about the freighter's deck. Up forward, near where they had hidden below the windlass, stood Jones and the white-uniformed little Captain, together with Turk, Bull, and several other sailors.

Apparently the business talk was concluded and, much more to the boys' concern, the freighter was making ready to hoist anchor and set off for ports unknown!

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Race Begins

EVEN AS THEY WATCHED, a working light mounted on the foremast suddenly flooded the foredeck with brilliance, bringing the shadowy figures into sharp focus, like actors on a brightly lighted stage.

Instinctively, Sandy and Jerry shrank back into the shadow of the life-jacket box, until Sandy realized that the bright light on the foredeck would make the rest of the ship almost invisible to people in its rays.

For a few seconds or more, the boys watched the tableau below them until several of the sailors ambled over to the windlass. Then Jerry said, "They're getting ready to hoist the anchor now.

We have to move fast if we're going to get to our boat before Jones gets to his!"

Still exercising the greatest care, they re-laced the canvas where they had entered the lifeboat, then quietly crept alongside the rails under the lifeboats until they came to the ladder connecting the boat deck to the afterdeck.

This, fortunately, was both deserted and unlighted, the deck crew having all gone forward to work on the windlass. The boys made their way down to the point where they had come on board via the rope ladder, which was still slung over the side, waiting for Jones's departure.

Looking over the bulwark, they saw the two sloops below them, bobbing gently in the swell that washed against the sheer side of the tall freighter. They looked almost unbelievably peaceful, and Sandy thought once again about Jones's comments about the unsuspicious looks of sailing craft. Next to their trim, small shapes, the freighter looked every bit as sinister as it had actually proved to be!

"This is it," Sandy whispered. "Let's make it fast!"

He stepped over the bulwark and disappeared down the rope ladder. Jerry was as close behind him as he could get without running the risk

of stepping on Sandy's hands. A moment more brought them to the deck of the sloop.

"Now comes the hard part," Jerry whispered. "We've got to get our sails up and shove off without anyone seeing or hearing us—and it's not exactly a quiet job. In fact, if I remember right, our slides squeak pretty badly in their track. I noticed it when we first took it out, and made a mental note to oil the track as soon as we got some time."

"Maybe we'd better not risk it," Sandy said. "Is there some way we can get away from here without having to hoist the sails right away?"

"Well . . ." Jerry said, "if there were enough current, we could drift off, but I don't think there is. Besides, it would take a long time, and I don't think we've got too much time to waste right now."

"Suppose we tow it off behind the dinghy?" Sandy asked. "You know, the way we brought it out of the harbor for the first day's sail."

"Good!" Jerry exclaimed. But it only took a moment's search to assure them that the dinghy was not with them. "Jones must have left it tied to his mooring," Jerry said. "That puts us back where we started."

"I guess there's nothing to do but try it with our sails," Sandy said. As he started to move forward, Jerry stopped him with a hand on his shoulder.

"Wait a minute! I think I know a way to do this! I remember I was once taught about sculling with the rudder. You use it like an oar. I've never had to try it, but this is probably the best time. C'mon! Let's cast off those lines!"

Working swiftly, Sandy cast off the bow line while Jerry did the same with the line at the stern. Then both of them pushed off from the side of the freighter, and the little sloop drifted noiselessly away from the scarred steel cliff of the huge hull.

The bright light from the foredeck spilled on the waters around the bow of the ship, and seemed even to light up the sloop. Sandy only hoped that whoever was standing lookout on the freighter was within that circle of light. If he was in the darkness of the upper decks, even the few dim beams that reflected from the white hull of the little sailboat would shine out like a warning beacon against the dark waters!

Sandy worked his way aft over the cabin roof, and dropped into the cockpit to join Jerry at the

tiller. Jerry was carefully working the tiller backward and forward, making small gurgling sounds as the rudder swept through the water.

"Here's the way it works," he said. "I'm using the rudder like a single stern paddle. Lots of boats in the old days used to be run like that. If the paddle's properly shaped, it will do a good job of propelling a boat. They call a long stern oar a sweep, and it's good enough so that it's still used on heavy barges in lots of places around the world."

"Won't it just push the stern around from one side to the other?" Sandy asked.

"Not if you do it carefully," Jerry replied. "What I'm doing is this: I ease the rudder to one side, slowly, so as not to row with it. Then I give it a strong pull toward me—like this—and then I shove it halfway back."

As he spoke, he hauled on the rudder, and the stern of the sloop swung around a bit, but the return motion of the rudder stopped the swinging action and steadied the sloop on her course. Sandy saw small ripples form a wake behind the boat as some forward motion was gained. As Jerry repeated the gentling, pulling and returning of the rudder, the sloop gained a little more forward

speed. Slowly, the rusted sides of the black freighter slid by them.

"So far, so good," Sandy said. "If we keep this up, we'll be able to get away before we're spotted."

"I hope so," Jerry agreed fervently, pulling strongly on his improvised sweep. By now the sloop was some thirty feet or more away from the freighter, and heading past the overhanging stern of the big ship. Suddenly, the stillness of the night was shattered by a roar and clank of machinery.

"It's the windlass!" Jerry cried. "They're getting ready to haul up the anchor! Jones must be ready to go over to his boat!"

Even as he spoke, a flare of work lights came up over the freighter's afterdeck, clearly showing Jones and the Captain standing by the head of the rope ladder, flanked by Turk and Bull. The Captain and Jones were shaking hands, apparently having concluded a deal on the counterfeit cargo that pleased them both. Neither of them had as yet looked over the side to see that one of the sloops was missing.

"We can't chance this any more," Jerry said. "We're bound to be discovered in another minute, when Jones starts over the ladder! Let's get those sails up now, and do the best we can!"

"You're right," Sandy agreed, swiftly leaping atop the cabin roof to reach the main halyards. Taking a deep breath, he hauled. With a screech, the slides moved stiffly up the track, and the mainsail fluttered overhead.

Moving quickly, Sandy grasped the jib halyard and hoisted it aloft while Jerry was fastening the main halyard to its cleat. The sloop began to make headway in the light breeze. Then, as Sandy joined his friend in the cockpit, the sloop sailed clear of the shadows that lay below the stern of the freighter, and into the circle of light that surrounded the afterdeck. At almost the same instant, a shout rang out from above them.

"Look! It's the kids!" It was Turk, who, seeing the sail like a luminous flag in the water, had sounded the alarm.

"Get down!" Sandy said, pulling Jerry to the deck of the cockpit. His action came not a minute too soon for a pistol shot rang out. It was followed by a volley of shots, as more of the freighter's crew got into the action, but the boys were unharmed, although two bullets had hit the cabin roof and one had plowed a furrow in the deck.

The shooting stopped after a few more stray shots were fired, the sloop having by now moved out of effective pistol range. Making the best head-

way they could in the light breeze, Sandy and Jerry looked back with satisfaction to see the freighter's crew working feverishly at the davits to get the ship's power gig into the water.

"If we can just get enough lead time," Jerry said fervently, "we'll make it to shore well ahead of them!"

"What if Jones follows in his boat?" Sandy asked.

"We'll worry about that if he does," Jerry answered. "He's a good sailor, but we have a lead on him. It'll be our first race, if it happens, and I sure hope we win!"

By now the power gig was hanging over the side, its davits having been swung into launching position. The canvas cover had been removed, and several sailors clambered in, waiting for the boat to be lowered. With a creak of blocks and tackle, the lifeboat was swiftly dropped to the water. The boys could see someone bending over the engine compartment, trying to get the boat started.

"Jones'll have a long wait, if he wants to go after us in that!" Sandy chuckled. "That ship is so sloppy, I'll bet it will take them an hour just to find the parts they need, once they discover what's wrong!"

But apparently Jones wasn't going to wait. He had sized up the situation quickly—too quickly—and was going over the side and down the rope ladder to the other sloop!

"Oh-oh!" Jerry said. "He's going to try to catch us in the other sloop! And we haven't got more than a few hundred yards on him yet. This is going to be some race!"

Some race! Sandy realized once again how different the meaning of speed is to a sailor and to a landsman. Here they were, in a gentle breeze on a calm sea, preparing to race for their very lives—and they would probably not sail faster than he could walk!

Consulting the stars, Jerry set a downwind course, and the boat headed slowly but steadily toward the mainland.

"We'd do better on some other point of sail," Jerry said, "but there's one consolation."

"What's that?" Sandy asked.

"He's got to sail on the same course we take, so he can't take advantage of any more favorable wind than the one we get. That, and the fact that the boats are the same, at least puts us on an even footing."

By now, Jones and a crew member were in the sloop, and were getting the sails up. Sandy

watched as the mainsail caught the light from the freighter, followed almost immediately by the jib. The sloop swung about into the trail of light that danced on the water between them and the big ship, and set her sails for a downwind tack.

Small waves whispered softly at the bow, and bubbles gurgled quietly in the wake. The mainsheet hardly pulled at all in Sandy's hand as the sail caught all the wind there was to catch. Hardly seeming to move at all, the sloop glided slowly ahead in the soft night breeze.

And the toughest race they would ever sail was under way!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A Race of Mistaken Identity

"TRIM YOUR MAIN!" Jerry said. "Haul back a little . . . more . . . no, let it out a shade . . . that's it! Cleat it down there!"

Sandy followed Jerry's directions carefully, hauling at the sheet to get the sail set to its best position. Like the airplane wing it resembles, the sail must be perfectly shaped to get the maximum advantage of the wind. Sandy had learned that this was true even on a downwind run, where a sail let out too far will spill wind, and a sail sheeted in too close will miss too much wind.

Rejoining Jerry on the cockpit seat, Sandy looked aft to catch sight of their pursuer. He was

surprised to see the amount of water that now separated them from the freighter, which seemed a spot of bright light far behind them. Against the light he could see the silhouetted shape of Jones's sloop. It seemed to him that they were closer than before, and he motioned Jerry to turn and look.

"You're right," Jerry said, guessing at the question that had formed in Sandy's mind. "They're closing in on us, all right. That Jones is sure some sailor! We'll have to do better than this if we're going to get ashore before they sail within pistol range!"

"What can we do?" Sandy asked, his brow wrinkling under the blond forelock that hung over his eyes.

"The only thing we can do is put on more sail," Jerry answered. "That won't be an easy job with just the two of us. And you've never handled a spinnaker."

"You'd better give me some fast instruction," Sandy breathed. "First, what's the spinnaker?"

"It's a big oversized jib, cut like a parachute," Jerry replied. "You saw a few out in the bay yesterday, remember? It's that big sail that flies out ahead of the boat. You can only use it on downwind sailing, unless you're a lot better sailor

than I am, and it's the best pulling power you can have when the wind's at your back."

"What do I have to do to help you?" Sandy asked.

"I'll have to put it up myself," Jerry told him. "Your job will be to hold a steady course and to keep the sails trimmed the way they are now."

Sandy grinned. "I won't look around to see how other boats look this time," he promised. Then he sobered. "I'll do my best to keep her sailing right. What'll you be doing?"

"I'll have to drop the jib, which will lose us some speed for a minute. Then I'll hoist the spinnaker, with a pole to the tack—that's the corner—to swing it outboard to where it will catch the wind. Then—but we can't waste time talking about it! I'll show you now and explain some other time!"

Both boys took another look back, but by now the night had swallowed up Jones's sloop, and all they could see was the glow of the freighter, growing rapidly smaller and fainter behind them.

"I wonder if Jones has seen that?" Sandy said. "The freighter must be under way. They haven't even waited for him, to see how things turn out!"

"I'm not surprised," Jerry said. "If Jones catches us, they don't have anything to worry about. And

if he doesn't . . . they want to be a long way away from here!"

Turning their attention back to their own problem, Jerry asked Sandy to go below to the cabin's sail locker and pull out the sail bags, but not to light even a match. The odds were that Jones still could not see them, and it was better to keep it that way.

"How will I know which is the spinnaker?" Sandy asked.

"We only have two sails below," Jerry answered. "We're flying the main and genoa jib now. That means that the only bags will have the working jib and the spinnaker. The working jib is the small bag, and the spinnaker will be as heavy as the mainsail."

In the cabin of the sloop it was as dark as it had been under the cover of the lifeboat. Sandy groped about, searching for the sail locker, which was forward of the mast, in the peak of the boat. Finally, after tripping a few times, and once bumping his head badly, he felt his hands come in contact with the brass catch that secured the locker.

Inside were several sail bags, most of them empty. He came on one that contained a sail, but it was obviously the small working jib. Worried now, Sandy burrowed deeper into the locker, and

at last found a bag that seemed heavier than the first. Relieved, he carried it out to the cockpit, where Jerry was anxiously looking aft.

"Look! If you look just about four points off our stern, you can see her!"

Sandy squinted to where Jerry had pointed, and made out a dim white shape through the darkness, surely no more than a few hundred yards behind them!

"They're closing in!" Jerry said. "I'd better rig this thing as fast as I can!"

He took the sail bag from Sandy, and crawled forward over the cabin. Sandy anxiously handled the tiller, hoping that he was keeping the course. Overhead, a few dim stars made points of light, and he leaned back to line up the masthead with one of them. In his right hand, the mainsheet felt light—too light—and he worried that he had so little control over it. What if they were to jibe now, as they had on the first day's sail? What if the sails were not properly trimmed? And how could he be sure they were? How long would it take Jones to catch up with them? Taking his eyes for a minute from the star and the masthead, he saw Jerry kneeling on deck, doing something with the sail. Then he looked back to the masthead, and

fixed all his attention on keeping the boat on a steady course.

Suddenly, Jerry was back in the cockpit with him, and the sail bag, still full, was dropped on the deck at his feet.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Sandy, was that the only heavy bag there was?" Jerry asked.

"That's right. The only other bag was so light it must have been the jib. What's the matter?"

Jerry shook his head slowly. "We're in real trouble now," he answered. "That's not a spinnaker at all. It's a spare genoa!"

"But—but I saw the bag marked spinnaker the other day!" Sandy spluttered. "Why would Uncle Russ put a spare genoa in a bag marked for a spinnaker?"

"He wouldn't," Jerry answered. "And what's more, he didn't. I was able to make out the letters on the bag, and they said 'genoa.' Brace yourself for a shock, buddy. I *know* we had a spinnaker aboard. And I know we didn't have two jennies!"

"Do you mean we've done it again?" Sandy gasped.

"That's right," Jerry said sadly. "We goofed again, and took Jones's boat instead of yours!"

There was nothing to say. They turned in silence to look aft at the dim white shape that followed them through the night, and that slowly ate away at the distance that kept them apart.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Slow-Motion Chase

"WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?" Sandy asked.

"Just what we're doing," Jerry answered mournfully. "Just sail the best we can and hope that he won't close in on us before we come across some other boat."

"Maybe Jones won't find our spinnaker," Sandy suggested. "If he thinks he's on his own boat, he knows he hasn't got a spinnaker below, and maybe he won't see any reason to go poking around in our sail locker."

"I wouldn't bet on it," Jerry said. "We can make a mistake like this—and make it twice—because neither of us is really familiar with your boat. But a good sailor like Jones knows his own

boat the way he knows his own living room. He isn't going to be fooled the same way we were!"

"Still," Sandy reasoned, "that's no guarantee he's going to go to our sail locker, is it?"

"It's almost a sure bet," Jerry replied. "He's probably got Turk looking around now to see what kind of extra canvas we might have on board, and when he finds that spinnaker, we can kiss our chances goodbye!"

"Well, he hasn't found it yet," Sandy said stubbornly. "And until he does, there must be something we can do to get more speed out of this boat!"

Stirring out of his gloom, Jerry trimmed the mainsheet and then the jib. Then suddenly he brightened. "Say! I remember reading about one trick that might help us. It's called wing-and-winging. What you do is rig the jib on the opposite side from the mainsail when you've got the wind at your back. It's supposed to act almost like a spinnaker."

"Well, let's do it!" Sandy said. "What do you want me to do?"

"You just hold the course, like before," Jerry explained. "I'll go forward and re-rig. When I tell you to, you uncleat the jenny sheet, and I'll swing

the sail around on the other side and brace it out. I'll use the boat hook for a whisker pole to hold it in place. Maybe this'll turn the trick!"

He clambered forward, and once more Sandy was left alone with the tiller, the star and the masthead. For a few minutes he thought only of holding the course, until he heard Jerry's voice, "Now!"

Leaning forward, Sandy uncleated the sheet which held the genoa jib in trim, where it had flown almost useless before the mainsail. He watched eagerly as Jerry hauled the sail around to the windward side, lashed the boat hook to the clew and swung the big triangle outboard. Almost instantly, the jenny started to fill, and Sandy felt the little sloop start forward.

Jerry quickly leaped into the cockpit and secured the sheet, trimming the billowing sail. "It's working!" he panted. "This may just turn the trick!"

They listened in satisfaction to the increased sound of the waves slipping past the sloop's sides and muttering in the wake. They could actually feel the difference in the motion of the boat.

"Jones has probably had his jib winged out all this time," Jerry said. "That's why he's been

closing in on us so fast. Maybe this will keep the distance the way it is until we can get ashore or get help!"

"I sure hope so!" Sandy agreed.

"Just hope he doesn't find that spinnaker! As long as we're both flying the same sail area, and as long as we're both heading downwind, there's not much he can do to catch us. Running before the wind this way, equal boats with equal canvas flown in the same way will come out just about the same. It's on a reach, or beating against the wind that expert sail handling really makes the difference. And I'm sure glad we're not on some other point of sail, because Jones would outsail us every time!"

With that thought to cheer them, the boys sailed in silence. Above them, clouds occasionally blotted out the stars of the dark moonless night, and it was hard to set a course by any one of them. At the helm, Jerry steered as much by the feel of the wind on his back as by the stars he could see.

Behind them always, never drawing any nearer, but never falling astern, was the white blur of Jones's canvas. It was as if the two boats were tied together with a fixed length of cable or a rigid bar that would not allow the gap between them to change.

The race went slowly. It was like a chase in some fantastic dream, Sandy thought, a dream where he was running in slow motion, trying with every ounce of strength to make his legs go faster.

But there was a difference, for here there was no exertion, no strain, except on the nerves. Here all was, to a casual glance, peaceful and pleasant. If any boat were to pass, all its passengers would see would be two pretty sloops, out for a night-time sail.

Suppose another boat did come? How would they know? Then Sandy remembered the flare pistol. He had put it on the seat when they had come aboard! Maybe the bulky brass gun would come in handy again! He searched the night for some sign of a boat's running lights, but saw only the same black sea and sky on all sides. Still, perhaps nearer shore . . .

The nightmarish quality of the race increased as each moment wore on. It seemed to Sandy that he was doomed to sail on forever, like the legendary Flying Dutchman, never getting to shore, never getting within hailing distance of another boat.

He strained his eyes against the darkness ahead, and then turned to look astern at the following shape of Jones's boat, stubbornly staying with

them at the same fixed distance. He almost wished that Jones would in some way catch up, just to break the tension. Maybe in a fight, there would be a chance! At least, they wouldn't just be sitting and waiting.

As he watched, something on the pursuing sloop seemed to change. A shimmer of white sails, then nothing.

"Jerry!" Sandy whispered, gripping his friend's arm. "Look back there! I thought I saw something change in his sails. I couldn't tell for sure, but doesn't it seem to you that the shape is different now?"

Jerry squinted back at Jones's boat. "I think you're right," he said. "It looks as if he's changed his sail trim some way. I wonder what he's got up his sleeve this time?"

"Do you think he's found our spinnaker?" Sandy asked.

As if in answer, the white shape behind them altered once more. A new piece was added to it—a long, flapping shape. As they watched, fascinated and fearful, but unable to do a thing, the long white triangle billowed out, changed into a full, taut shape and lifted high above the deck of Jones's boat.

"So that's a spinnaker," Sandy said.

"It sure is," Jerry answered grimly. "Take a good look at it, because it may turn out to be the last one we'll ever see!"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Turn and Turn Again

As JONES'S SPINNAKER filled and lofted, a fresh breeze came up from astern, tugged at the rigging, tightened the sails and sent the boys' sloop ahead at a sharper pace.

"Feel the breeze!" Sandy said. "Maybe that'll help us out of trouble!"

"I wouldn't bet on it," Jerry replied. "The same breeze is helping Jones, and he's got an awful big sail up to catch it!"

"Even so, Jerry," Sandy objected, "I seem to remember you saying something that ought to give us a chance now . . ."

"If you do, you'd better let me know," Jerry

said, "because I sure don't feel very full of ideas now."

Sandy wrinkled his brow and strained at his memory. There seemed to be some fact, some idea half remembered from all Jerry had told him, that ought to help. He looked astern, and the sight of Jones's sloop bearing down on them and swiftly closing the gap between the two racing boats, seemed to have just the stimulating effect he was looking for.

"I know!" he almost shouted. "Didn't you say that we can do better on a reach than a boat with a spinnaker can do downwind?"

"That's right," Jerry said doubtfully. "But we have to sail a downwind course to get to shore."

"Well, what's your hurry?" Sandy asked. "Why don't we put off going ashore just now? I mean, if we take off on a reach, maybe we can lose Jones in the dark before he can change sails to follow us. If we can just put some distance between us, we can head back for shore later!"

Jerry clapped Sandy on the shoulder and shouted, "You're right!" Then he looked back at Jones's boat, clear in shape, but not in detail. "I wish I could see how he has his spinnaker sheeted, but I can't make it out. Still, let's just take a chance." He looked at Sandy in admiration. "Boy,

you're sure catching on fast! That was a real racing sailor's idea!"

Carefully selecting the best course to give their boat the most speed and to lose the least time in putting about, Jerry instructed Sandy.

"We're going to jibe," he said, "but don't worry. This is going to be deliberate, not accidental. It's the accidental jibes that wreck the rigging. We're going to put about this way so's not to waste time shifting the genoa jib to the other side. As soon as I've got that whisker pole ready to come off, we'll do it."

He went forward, and after a moment's work, quickly returned to the cockpit. "Ready now," Jerry said. "I'll take the tiller and you take the mainsheet. As I start to put about, you haul in on the sheet, until the boom is right over the keel of the boat. Then I'll put her hard over, and you let the sail out evenly on the other side until I say stop. Got it?"

Sandy wasn't sure, but he figured that this was no time for more detailed instruction on the art of the deliberate jibe. Holding the mainsheet, and his breath, he silently hoped that he knew what he was doing. One mistake now—the wrong kind of jibe, that could wreck the rigging—would surely put them back in Jones's hands.

He watched Jerry carefully, and, following his instructions, started to haul in on the mainsheet. It came very lightly and easily. Remembering the terrific force of the jibe on the first day's sailing, though, Sandy knew enough not to be fooled by appearances. He shortened the sheet so that he would not be taken unawares when the wind caught the mainsail on its new tack.

A few seconds of hauling and shortening brought the mainsail directly over the center of the boat, with the sheet securing it tightly against the dangerous sudden jibe. Then, as Jerry brought the sloop about hard on her new course, the wind took the sail. The boat heeled far over, leaning its lee side into the waves through which they were cutting with a new speed.

Sandy held hard to the sheet, the pull of which was almost cutting his hand. The load of wind in the taut sail transmitted its strength to the sheet, and became a hauling, tug-of-war enemy.

"Let her out!" Jerry shouted. "More! More! Okay . . . hold her there!" Sandy felt some of the pull lessen as he allowed the sail to swing farther out over the side. "Good," Jerry said. "Now take the tiller—hold everything as it is—while I free the jenny and trim it properly."

Sandy, the mainsheet wound tightly about his

right hand, took the tiller in his left, while Jerry went forward to do his job. He was burning with eagerness to look back to see how their maneuver had affected Jones, but he didn't dare. He had too much to think about to take his eyes away even for a second from his own work of sailing. This was the first time he had handled both the tiller and mainsheet and it was really the first time he had actually handled the boat. There was a new sense of command now and of real control. The feel of the boat was complete. It almost seemed alive. His hands told him how a change of rudder position worked a change on the sail, or how a shift of the mainsail, a few inches in or out, affected the pull on the helm.

In a few minutes, Jerry was back in the cockpit, trimming the genoa sheet and setting the sail in its best shape ahead of and overlapping the mainsail. When all was made fast, he took the tiller from Sandy once more, and the boys were at last free to look back.

What they saw was not encouraging. As they had expected, the change of course had increased the distance between them and Jones, but the distance was not great enough to take them out of sight. A few minutes of looking revealed that they were not likely to outdistance Jones on this

tack any more than they had on the downwind run.

"How come we can't beat him?" Sandy asked. "He surely hasn't had time to get his spinnaker down and his genoa up, has he?"

"He didn't have to," Jerry answered. "He's using his spinnaker now as if it were a genoa. It's a good stunt. What he did was to bring the spinnaker pole forward and lash it to the deck, so that it made a kind of bowsprit. Then he sheeted the sail flat. It makes a powerful sail that way."

"What if he wants to go on the opposite tack?" Sandy asked. "How can he put about?"

Jerry grinned. "I think you've done it again, Skipper," he said. "That's the best question you've asked all night!"

"What do you mean?" Sandy asked, puzzled.

"I mean that he can't put about on the other tack without an awful lot of trouble. We can, and we will, and with luck we'll lose him that way!"

This time the maneuver was a familiar one of bringing the sloop up into the wind, shifting the genoa jib and coming off the wind to the new tack. It was performed smoothly, both boys working like an experienced crew.

On the new tack, they looked about once more for Jones's following sloop. As they had hoped,

the strange zigzag they had described had left him far astern, but still in sight. Even as they watched, they saw Jones drop his spinnaker and re-rig it on the new tack. Once more, he was in pursuit!

"I've never seen anyone handle sails that well," Jerry said in unwilling admiration.

"Do you think we can outmaneuver him?" Sandy asked.

"Well, we might keep up the sort of thing we've been doing," Jerry answered. "If we keep changing tacks, we can probably keep him out of close shooting range all night. Then, by morning, we can hope to see some other boats and maybe get help. There's only one thing wrong with that plan, though."

"I know," Sandy offered. "We're all right as long as we don't make any mistakes. But the minute we goof on one maneuver, we lose the race! Right?"

"Right," Jerry said. "Still, I don't see what else we can do but try. We haven't got much choice."

As they sailed on in silence, Sandy reviewed their situation. The trouble with their plan was a simple one. They had to do a perfect job of sailing, and he doubted whether they were up to it. All Jones had to do was follow their maneuvers, and when they made their first mistake, he would

close in. There was no hope, he could see, in waiting for Jones to make the first mistake himself. The man was too good for that.

If only they could find some new way to take the initiative, things might work out, Sandy thought. This cat-and-mouse game couldn't possibly do any good. Besides, even if they could hold out till daylight, there was no guarantee that they would get help from any other boat before Jones could finish the job. After all, lack of light was all that was preventing Jones from firing at them now. When morning came, it would most likely be accompanied by a hail of shots!

The more Sandy thought, the less it seemed that they could find a way out of their desperate straits. Then his gloomy thoughts were interrupted by Jerry.

"Got any more ideas?" he asked. "I know it's my turn to think up a good one, but I can't seem to come up with a thing."

"I don't know," Sandy answered. "It seems to me though, that we're going to have to do something really different now if we're going to get back to shore in one piece!"

Then he suddenly sat up straighter, pushing back his blond forelock. "Jerry! I think I have an idea!"

"What is it?" Jerry asked eagerly.

"It may sound crazy, but I want to go back on a downwind course again!"

Jerry looked puzzled. "A downwind course? Sandy, we don't have a chance that way! That's the way we were sailing when Jones first started after us, and with his spinnaker in place, he'll have us in no time!"

"I know," Sandy said, "but I have an idea that might work this time. I want Jones to get close—real close—to try this!"

Jerry shook his head. "It sounds nutty to me," he said, "but if you think you've got something that'll work, I'm game. Just tell me what . . ."

"Not now, Jerry," Sandy cut him off. "Let's just change course while I work out the details. If we don't do this now, I might lose my nerve!"

"I'll do it," Jerry agreed, shaking his head doubtfully from side to side. "But what worries me isn't that you might lose your nerve. I'm afraid that you've already lost your mind!"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The End of the Race

IT WAS STILL PITCH-DARK on the Pacific, miles off Cliffport, but Sandy saw a dim, gray smear of light in the east that told him dawn was not too far off. Dawn—and the shots it would bring from Jones and Turk!

If his plan didn't work now, it would never work, he knew. This was to be really a one-shot try! But better to try, he felt, than to tack aimlessly back and forth, waiting for Jones to close in.

Almost mechanically, Sandy helped Jerry put the sloop about on her new course before the wind. Once again the genoa jib was held out wing-and-wing with the boat hook, and once again the mainsheet exercised only a light pull in his hand.

With everything set, Sandy and Jerry turned their attention to the sloop behind them.

The pursuing white sails shone dimly through the darkness as Jones followed them in their course. His spinnaker, released from its duty as a genoa, was once more flying full and round before him, taking advantage of every puff of wind at his back. It was a foregone conclusion that he would catch them now, unless they were even faster than before in putting about on some new tack.

Jerry could not stand the suspense a moment longer. "Sandy, what are you going to do?" he cried. "Whatever it is, if we don't do it now, we're goners!"

"Not yet," Sandy muttered. "He's got to get closer!"

"If he gets any closer, he's going to start shooting," Jerry replied. "What do we do then?"

"We've got to be ready for it," Sandy answered. "I expect him to shoot, and I expect him to start pretty soon. In fact, we'd better get down as far as possible right now!"

Both boys sat together on the cockpit deck, Jerry awkwardly steering and Sandy holding the mainsheet in his left hand. "You steer, Jerry," he said. "I'm going to turn around so I can keep an eye

on Jones. I expect the fireworks to start any minute now!"

"I can do without the entertainment," Jerry said. Then he added once more, "Boy, I sure hope you know what you're doing! If you don't . . ." His voice trailed off.

Half kneeling, Sandy crouched by the stern seat, keeping as much under cover as possible. Over the edge of the afterdeck he saw Jones's sloop, closer now than it had been ever since their fantastic race had begun. For some reason, Jones was holding back, not closing in as fast as he had been before. Sandy knew that he must be puzzled, and trying to figure out what their next move would be. His success depended on outthinking them as much as it did on outsailing them, and his skill lay largely in his ability to guess what maneuver the boys were going to try next. This time, Sandy thought, he must really be baffled. No one in his right mind would try to escape as they were doing!

For minutes that seemed like hours, the chase continued with Jones making no effort to advance. Then, Sandy realized, Jones made up his mind to attack. His sails were trimmed fuller, his spinnaker lofted higher, and a white bow wave broke out to signify Jones's new speed. There wasn't

much time left now before things would start popping!

By now, less than one hundred yards separated the two boats. Not much more distance, Sandy thought, than a target range. Still, it wasn't quite close enough . . .

A shot! As they heard the crack of the pistol, the whine of the bullet passed overhead! Another shot —another—and a piece of the coaming splintered off uncomfortably close to Sandy's ear!

Jones's boat surged on, preceded by a rain of shots. Now less than fifty yards of water were between them! More shots followed, mostly going through the sails. With a *thunk,* one hit the hull—another gouged up the deck—a third hit the tiller, not six inches from Jerry's hand.

Jerry's face looked white as he craned his neck to look up at his friend. "Whatever you're planning, I wish you'd tell me now," he said. "Because I may not be around to see the big moment when it comes!"

"You'll be here," Sandy said, "because the big moment is now! Turn around with me and watch Jones's boat. If this works, it's going to be something worth watching!"

As Jerry changed his position, he saw for the first time that Sandy had the big brass flare gun in

his hand! He was cocking it carefully, and keeping an eye on Jones's sloop which seemed to be almost ready to ram them. Lying flat on the foredeck of the pursuing boat, they could clearly see the figure of Turk, hurriedly reloading his pistol.

"You're not going to try to shoot him with that?" Jerry said. "Those things are way too inaccurate! You won't stand a chance!"

"Not him," Sandy said. "It!" He steadied the flare gun on the edge of the afterdeck and squinted down its length, aiming at the spinnaker!

Seeing now what Sandy was attempting, Jerry crouched beside him and held his breath. Sandy waited till almost the last possible minute until, just as Turk was raising his pistol to fire once more, he released the flare.

A dazzling arc of fire leaped from the brass muzzle straight for the bellying spinnaker! It landed in a shower of sparks, bright enough to show them Turk's astonished face turned upward to see what had hit them. The shot had hit squarely in the center of the ballooning sail, burning a small, red-ringed hole which slowly spread.

Would this be all? Just a spreading ring of coals that would die in a minute or two? If this was all, it was not enough! Then, just as Sandy was beginning to fear that he had made a mistake that might

well 'cost them everything, the sail burst into flame!

The column of fire shot straight upward into the blackness of the night, vividly illuminating both boats. In its brilliant light, the boys saw Turk stand up, black against the flames, then leap overboard.

"One down!" Sandy said. "But what about Jones?"

As the flaming spinnaker spread its fire to the mainsail and the mast, they saw Jones rise in the cockpit, level his rifle and shoot. Six shots rang out in quick succession, and all six whizzed harmlessly by. Then Jones flung his empty gun into the sea and turned his attention to the fire.

Jerry and Sandy sailed slowly away from the flaming scene, and then started to sail in a circle around it, still watching Jones. He had gotten a bucket from below, and was throwing sea water, as fast as he could scoop it up, over the burning and the unburned parts of the sloop. The fire was gaining though, and his efforts were obviously doomed to failure.

"If he hadn't been so busy shooting when the fire started," Jerry said, "he would have stood a good chance of putting it out. The delay is going to sink him!"

Jones worked feverishly until the last possible moment, until the decks and the cabin were aflame, and the fire had spread to the little cockpit. Finally, when it was obvious that there was no more he could do, he kicked off his shoes and jumped over the side.

"What do we do now?" Sandy asked. "We can't just leave them there to drown. They probably deserve it, but I don't think it's up to us to judge what kind of sentence they get."

"You're right," Jerry agreed. "But if we take them aboard, we won't stand much of a chance against them. Why don't we try to find them and toss them a couple of life jackets so they can stay afloat while we make up our minds?"

It was no trouble to find Turk, who came swimming up to the side to beg to be taken aboard. Sandy kept the empty flare pistol aimed at him while Jerry looked for the life jackets. When he had found them, he tossed one over the side, and Turk struggled into it. Then, still frightened of the flare gun which he did not know was empty, he held up his hands tamely to allow Jerry to tie them together.

"Now will ya lemme come on board?" he pleaded.

"I don't think so," Sandy answered. "I think

you'll be safer at the end of a long line. Just relax, and we'll tow you back to shore!"

With Turk in tow, the sloop handled rather sluggishly as the boys circled the scene of the fire searching for Jones. The bright light of the flames had died to a glowing, dull orange which was soon to go out altogether as the sloop settled lower and lower in the water.

"What we need is a searchlight," Jerry said. "We may never find him unless he swims to us the way Turk did!"

"Listen!" Sandy said. "If I'm not mistaken, I hear a searchlight coming now!"

Turning in the direction of the new sound of powerful marine motors, they were met with a bright searchlight beam, which swept from them to the burning sloop and back again. For the first time since their adventure had started, Sandy felt a genuine feeling of relief, as the Coast Guard cutter reversed its engines and came to a neat stop alongside.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Another Discovery

WITH THE ARRIVAL of the Coast Guard, the problem of finding Jones solved itself. He quickly realized the hopelessness of his position and swam in from the darkness toward the cutter and the sloop, tamely giving himself up.

It was only after he and Turk had both been taken on board the Coast Guard vessel and placed under guard that the captain of the cutter, Lieutenant Ames, started to ask the necessary questions.

He listened, absorbed in the story, until Sandy had finished talking. Then he sighed. "That's quite a yarn, boys. It sounds pretty wild. For your sakes, I hope that you can show some evidence to back it up. Otherwise, all we have is your word.

Now, your word may be good enough for me—" he held up a hand to forestall Sandy's objections— "but it's going to take more than that to make a charge of counterfeiting stick in a court of law."

"We've *got* more than that!" Sandy said angrily. "We can show you the island, and unless I miss my guess, we'll find Jones's counterfeiting presses there!"

"I hope so," Lieutenant Ames said. "Meanwhile, since you've made charges against these men, I'll hold them in custody until we get ashore. Then I'll turn them and the whole case over to the FBI, where it belongs."

His official statement done, Lieutenant Ames relaxed into a boyish grin. "You can get those scowls off your faces now," he said. "I just wanted you to realize that we've got to have good, solid proof before this business is over with. As for me, I believe your story, and I think the FBI will, too."

"I'm not too worried about proving our story about Jones and Turk," Sandy said. "But what worries me is how we're going to get the freighter, now that it's out of U.S. coastal waters."

"The Navy will take care of them," Lieutenant Ames said. "But that reminds me, you didn't tell

me the name of the freighter, and we'll need to radio that to the Navy right away."

"I noticed the name on the lifeboat," Jerry said. "It was the *Mary N. Smith,* from Weymouth."

"No!" Sandy said. "You must have gotten it mixed up in the darkness. I saw it clear as day on the stern. It was the *Martin South* from Yarmouth!"

"I'm sure I had it right," Jerry said. "I remember thinking to myself that it was a pretty innocent, girlish name for such a dirty freighter!"

"Maybe you're both right," Lieutenant Ames said. "It sounds to me as if both names have a lot in common. They probably have a set of phony papers under each name—and maybe under three or four more names that sound a lot like those. That way, all they have to do is paint out and change a few letters after each port, instead of having the whole job to do. It allows them to make quick shifts of identity."

"It also lets them explain that they were picked up because of an accidental similarity of names, in case of trouble," Jerry put in. "I wonder what name they're using now," he added.

"That's pretty easy to guess," the Coast Guard officer said. "If I were changing names after

leaving a port, I'd paint the bow and stern while I was at anchor, and leave the lifeboats and other things for when I was at sea. My guess is that we'll find them sailing as the *Martin South* from Yarmouth."

"Unless," Sandy added, "unless they decided to change it to something else while at sea, after the trouble. After all, they have no idea whether Jones got us or we got him, and they'll probably be expecting to get picked up."

"Well, we won't take any chances," Ames said. "I'll radio the Navy now to be on the lookout for any freighter with a name anything like *Martin South* or *Mary N. Smith.* And if I know those boys, we'll have a report on them within the next few hours!"

After giving his instructions to the radio operator, Ames decided it was time to head for shore and turn over Jones, Turk and the boys to the FBI. It was decided to take the sloop in tow behind the cutter, and Sandy went over the side to find a towing line to hand up to the cutter's deck.

"Come on over with me," Sandy said, "and I'll show you some of the bullet holes we're carrying. They ought to help support our story!"

Lieutenant Ames followed Sandy over the side

and joined him on the deck of the little sloop, where he examined the holes in the sail and the furrows in the deck and the coamings. "They sure came close!" he said. "You're pretty lucky to be here in one piece now." He ran his finger thoughtfully along a deep scar in the coaming near where Sandy's head had been, and whistled low when he saw the splintered spot on the tiller.

Lieutenant Ames followed Sandy below in search of the spare mooring line. (The original one had been left dangling from the deck of the freighter.) He stood stooped over in the low cabin, surveying the trim accommodations. At last, Sandy found a line that would do, stowed away up forward with the anchor.

Joining Ames in the cabin, he pointed to the locker above the compact galley. "There's where we found the money when we went looking for the canned food," he said. "It was filled up all the way to here," he indicated, sliding back the locker door.

"What do you mean, *was?*" the Coast Guard officer asked with a gasp. The open locker door revealed the stacked counterfeit, untouched, just as the boys had first seen it!

"Whew!" Sandy sighed. "Well, I guess *that* takes care of our case against Jones!"

As they towed the sloop back to Cliffport, heading into the bright colors of a Pacific sunrise, they pieced together what must have happened.

"From what we overheard on the freighter," Sandy said, "Jones and the freighter captain were both dissatisfied with the original deal they had made for the counterfeit money. Jones wanted more for the stuff, because of the risk he had run with us and because of the added chances he was taking if we disappeared from Cliffport. A local investigation of our disappearance might turn up someone who had seen us near his island."

"Right," Jerry added. "And the Captain wanted a larger share than usual for himself because of the risk he was running in getting rid of us for Jones. They bargained about it for a long time."

Lieutenant Ames nodded. "And Jones wasn't taking any chances by bringing the money on board until his deal had been settled. He must have been going for it when you saw him and the Captain shaking hands on deck. And the reason he was so desperate when he saw you sailing off was that he knew you were not only escaping, but escaping with the evidence!"

"I guess it's not always a bad thing," Sandy laughed, "to make the same mistake twice!"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Homeward Bound

THREE DAYS LATER, the case ended where it had really begun—back in the Cliffport Boat Yard. Only this time, Sandy and Jerry picked their way over the timbers and rails with Lieutenant Ames instead of with Sandy's Uncle Russ.

"I guess you boys are glad this is all over," he said. "I suppose you're all set for your trip home now?"

"We sure are," Jerry said. "We just need to buy a few things, and we're ready."

"It was sure nice of the FBI to let us have Jones's sloop as part of the reward," Sandy added. "I felt pretty bad when I saw my boat on fire. I

was sure that if we ever got back to shore, we'd be taking the train home!"

"There was no sense in keeping it," Ames said. "Not even for evidence. We had all the evidence we needed with that bundle of counterfeit money —and even more than that, with the printing press and the plates we found at Jones's little resort. And everyone agreed that you ought to have it."

They walked along the sea wall until they reached the corner of the shed, where Lieutenant Ames suddenly stopped. "As long as you're thanking the FBI for the boat," he said, "I think you might as well thank the Coast Guard too!"

"Well, of course," Sandy said, puzzled. "I only meant that it was the FBI who really had title to it, and they were the ones who decided . . . I mean, we're grateful to you all."

Ames laughed. "I don't want to keep you in the dark," he said. "The FBI gave you the boat, all right, but we decided to pitch in a little, too. Look!"

They turned the corner of the boat-yard shed. In front of them, resting in a high cradle, was the sloop, freshly painted and gleaming in the sun, her sides as smooth as glass.

After both boys had thanked Lieutenant Ames

profusely, Jerry asked, "How did you ever get so much done in just three days?"

"Oh, that's the Coast Guard way with boats," Ames said and he laughed. "A whole gang of the boys decided to go to work on her, and we did in three days what would take most boat yards a week or two. It started when we decided to fix up the bullet scars, and it just didn't stop until we had finished the whole thing!"

Climbing to the deck, they inspected the newly painted cabin and cockpit, the freshly varnished coamings and mast, the almost invisible repairs on the decks.

"We'll have her launched within the next hour," Lieutenant Ames said. "Why don't you go into town to buy whatever you need in the meanwhile? It shouldn't take you too long to get stores for a short trip."

"That's a good idea," Sandy said. "But we're going to need more than the regular stores. I'm going to spend some of that reward money right away on a new spinnaker. That's one thing I've decided never to be without again!"

"Not only that," Jerry added, "but we want to get some more shells for the flare pistol. I don't think I'll ever feel comfortable without that on board!"

"There's something else, too," Sandy said. "I think we ought to think up a name for this boat right away, and pick up some brass letters for the stern. I don't want to keep on making mistakes!"

Ames joined in the laughter, then said, "That's one thing I think you don't have to do. That is, unless you don't like the name the Coast Guard picked out for you!"

Rushing to the stern, Sandy and Jerry leaned over to see the shiny brass letters screwed to the counter of their sloop. Looked at upside down, they spelled:

REWARD